THE ROLE OF OPEN AND DISTANCE LEARNING (ODL) IN PROMOTING GENDER BALANCE: A CASE OF OPEN UNIVERSITY OF TANZANIA

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A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF EDUCATION IN OPEN AND DISTANCE LEARNING OF THE OPEN UNIVERSITY OF TANZANIA

2017

CERTIFICATION

The undersigned certifies that she has read and hereby recommends for acceptance by the Open University of Tanzania a dissertation entitled: *Roles of open and Distance Learning (ODL) in Promoting Gender Balance: a Case of Open University of Tanzania,* in fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Education in Open and Distance Learning (MED-ODL) of the Open University of Tanzania.

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Prof. Elinami Swai

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Date

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DECLARATION

I, **Helena Peter**, do hereby declare that this dissertation is my own original work and that it has not been presented and will not be presented to any other university for a similar or any other degree award.

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Signature

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Date

DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my beloved family (My husband Mr. Paul Kingu and my children Mary and Angela) for their warmth, love, support, prayers, encouragement and tolerance throughout my entire academic pursuits. All of what they did strengthened me and brought sunshine in my academic endeavor.

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ABSTRACT

This study aimed at examining the extent to which ODL promotes gender balance, using the Open University of Tanzania (OUT) as a case study. The study was guided by four objectives: to examine the characteristics of ODL leaners in terms of sex aggregate at OUT, to determine the strategies used by OUT to promote gender balance, to assess the quality of teachers in different faculties at OUT and to determine gender specific challenges that learners face at OUT. The study employed a mixed method approach with multiple case study design to guide data collected from 51 respondents who responded to open-ended questionnaire, interview and focused group discussions. The key findings show that OUT had the following characteristics: most married with family responsibilities, aged above 35, in-service learner with a relatively low completion rate and high dropout rate. The study also established that OUT used its established gender unit, 50:50 enrolment policy and has mainstreamed its gender programmes and plans and activities towards promoting gender balance. Regarding the quality of academic staff, it was revealed that members of the academic staff had various levels of educational qualifications which were PhD, masters and first degree and that OUT gave opportunity for them to be sensitive to issues of gender. However, the study found that although the policy aims at reaching fifty-fifty, this goal has not been reached. The study recommended a need to devise mechanism to ensure that gender is more vigorously promoted mitigate the challenges that impede reaching fifty-fifty.

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LIST OF ABREVIATION

BEST	Basic Education Statistics
EFA	Education for All
FGDs	Focus Group Discussions
HESLB	Higher Education Students Loan Board
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
MOEVT	Ministry of Education and Vocational Training
NHSC	National Home Study Council
ODL	Open and Distant Learning
OUT	Open University of Tanzania
TCU	Tanzania Commission of University
UNESCO	United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organization
ZOU	Zimbabwe Open University

CHAPTER ONE

1.0 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND TO THE PROBLEM

1.1   Introduction

This study aimed at examining the role of open and distance learning (ODL) in combating the issues of gender inequality in terms of access and quality in the field of higher education in Tanzania. The education system in Tanzania is mainly characterized by educational disparity. The standard of education is directly proportional to the investment students make in the form of registration and fees. Another important issue is the non-availability of higher learning institutions in small towns and rural communities. Unfortunately, very few people from rural areas have access to quality higher education (Swai, 2004). Open University of Tanzania through its distance learning mode has come forward to break this trend in gender inequality by providing equal educational opportunities to all social, economic, cultural classes through its affordable fee structure yet ensuring high standards of teaching.

1.2   Background to the Problem

Access to higher education has always remained a major issue in the developing world due to resource limitation and unavailability of qualified teaching staff (Moll, 2004). Another major factor that has widened the gap of educational disparity in the developing world is lack of financial resources, which implies that those who have economic resources have better chances of getting quality education. Poor class, the majority of which are women is kept devoid of quality education due to the resource

limitation and inaccessibility to reputed public institution. This phenomenon is believed to be the product of gender inequality in terms of access to resources that has not only turned education into an industry but has also established an apparatus for the reproduction of the same social structure over generations (Greaves, Hill & Maisuria, 2007).

Gender disaggregated data on education has revealed that compared to their male counterparts, women have, for the most part, attained only low levels of formal education (Mnyanyi & Mbwette, 2009). This is based on cultural factors and women's role in society – child bearing, child upbringing, community commitments and societal perceptions.

Tanzania has been in a long search for appropriate measures of expanding its educational programmes to meet its population growth and the increasing demand for tertiary education. The country is also in search for an educational system that will bridge the gender gap. Despite the opening up of higher education provision to non-governmental organizations, individuals and religious institutions since 1990s, the country still suffers an overall limited access to tertiary education and lower female enrolment and the nation's educational policy is to obtain 50% males to 50% females in tertiary education has become elusive dream (MoEVT, 2014). Among the efforts to bridge the gender gap is the affirmative action to reduce the selection aggregate by one for women.

In the last decade the efforts to eliminate gender imbalance in both secondary and tertiary education proved failure. The failure to remove or narrow gender gap in

education in Tanzania is related to the challenges listed above. Because of failure to eliminate gender gap in the provision of education in Tanzania, a majority of the females cannot access formal employment. Swai (2014) argues that employers look for level of education before dwelling on attitude towards work and individual aptitudes. The table below give the picture in terms of access in secondary and tertiary education from 2009 - 2013.

Table 1.1: Access to Secondary education By Gender

Type	Public		Private	
Years/Levels	Males	Female	Males	Females
2009	728322	565369	84622	88088
2010	792974	608356	117197	120172
2011	854739	660932	132254	141622
2012	875480	727272	134993	146527
2013	796895	707816	142296	157049

Source: BEST (2014)

Table 1.2: Female/Male Access at the University Level

Academic Years	Public		Private	
	Males (%)	Females (%)	Males (%)	Females (%)
2008/2009	51,494 (68.63%)	23,537 (31.37%)	15,905 (60.75%)	10,286 (39.27%)
2009/2010	58,817 (65.75%)	30,632 (34.25%)	20295 (59.72%)	13,690 (20.28%)
2010/2011	62,974(67.73%)	30,003(32.27%)	25,204 (59.46%)	17,186 (40.54%)
2011/2012	72,214 (66.13%)	36,992 (33.87%)	33880 (59.07%)	23188 (40.63%)
2012/2013	86,137 (66.71%)	42,988 (33.29%)	42,449 (59.7%)	29412 (40.93%)

Source: TCU (2014)

From the above table it can be stated that enrollment in universities and university colleges increased from 95,525 in 2008/2009 to 204,175 (113.7%) in 2012/2013 (MoEVT, 2014). The increase has been contributed by an increased in accesses to HESLB funds and increase in the number of Higher Learning Institutions including OUT (MoEVT,2014) However, in 2012/2013 academic year the participation of

female students in degree courses both in public and private universities and university colleges was 35.2% and 39.6% in non-degree courses (MoEVT, 2014).

However, in all academic years, even though the participation of female in both public and private universities and university colleges increased, when compared to their counterpart males, their participation remained relatively lower. This suggests that gender imbalance is still a problem in Tanzanian education system especially higher education. In that sense, studying whether higher learning institutions are responsive to gender imbalance necessitates for further research interventions.

It should be understood from the onset that Open and Distance Leaning has an important and flexible mode of education delivery focusing on equitable access to educational opportunities. In the last decade, it has caught the attention of scholars, hence varied conceptions. Mnyanyi and Mbwette (2009) view it as the most worthwhile means of supporting attainment of academic, social and economic development. MoEVT (2013) perceives the provision of education through distance learning as the mode of education delivery in which a teacher and students are separated by distance, but they may occasionally meet for tutorial (face-to-face sessions). In that sense, it can be generally argued that ODL takes education to many leaners separated by time and space from those who are teaching (Komba, 2009). It is therefore, the approach of education delivery that has high potential of overcoming learning obstacles as evidenced with distance, time and age.

ODL mode of educational delivery has been theorized important to make learning more accessible to a wider population. A study by the Ministry of Education and

Vocational Training (MoEVT, 2013) found that provision of education in Tanzania through ODL had increased education opportunities for different groups regardless of their gender, age, status or colour. This was possible because of the growing need for continual skills upgrading and reskilling, and advances of technology in teaching through distance instead of only relying on traditional or conventional modes of educational delivery.

Indeed, ODL is crucial towards the realization of international and national policies and goals, including Education for All (EFA) goals. It is now one of the reputable methods of education as evidenced by the establishment of numerous ODL institutions worldwide and the increase of enrolment of students in these institutions (Ndudzo & Nyatanga, 2013). Governments also are cognizance of the potential of ODL in fulfilling the fundamental rights of all people to learning and the need to incorporate it within the framework of human capital development.

In particular, the government of Tanzania has over the years considered education as central to both national and human development (MoEVT, 2013). ODL mode has therefore, been an important approach to cater for education needs of majority Tanzanians including the need for higher education. In 1992 the parliament authorized establishment of the Open University of Tanzania (OUT). Its establishment legitimated higher education through ODL mode in 1994 with the aim to increase access to education (Mnyanyi & Mbwette, 2009). Today OUT operates through a network of 29 regional centres, 8 coordinated centres and 69 study centres spread within and outside the United Republic of Tanzania (OUT, 2014).

It is evident that ODL institutions all world over have experienced increased enrolments due to improved access to the internet and the trend towards globalization (Ndudzo & Nyatanga, 2013). India for example, has high and growing enrolments in ODL institutions. Almost 22% of the total number of students enrolled in higher education system pursue their studies through ODL mode (Dikshit, 2003 in Ndudzo & Nyatanga, 2013). Zimbabwe has also experienced increased growth of students' enrolment. In 2003 for example, the Zimbabwe Open University (ZOU) enrolled about 46.9% of the total university enrolment in the country (Ndudzo & Nyatanga, 2013).

Since its inception in 1994, the Open University of Tanzania (OUT) has similarly witnessed an influx of enrolments for both male and female students (Komba, 2009). Evidence prove that between 1994 and 2014 a total of 92, 568 students had been enrolled for OUT services out of which 48,526; 16,940 and 27,558 students were studying undergraduate, post graduate and non-degree programmes respectively (OUT, 2014). More than 47.2% of enrolled students come from OUT regions of Arusha, Dar es salaam, Iringa, Kilimanjaro, Mbeya, Morogoro, Mwanza and Tabora whose enrolments are more than 2803 students. However, Dar es Salaam stands as an outstanding region with highest enrolments of 10,901 (7255 male and 3646 female) students as compared to other OUT regions (OUT, 2014). Kinondoni centre has the highest cumulative enrolment of 7334 (3984 male and 3350 female) students when compared to other centres of Ilala and Temeke in Dar es Salaam (OUT, 2014). These statistics are a proof of the growth of ODL as evidenced with enrolment increase. Despite the fact that males enrolment has stood higher than their counterpart females,

it is true beyond doubt that it has relatively increased in both. According to Komba (2009) the percentage of female has increased on average from 18.6% in 2001 to 26% in 2005.

While ODL mode is now becoming an important approach for equitable access to higher education opportunities among male and female needy people, there is the issue of enrolment increase of both male and female students in ODL institutions ever experienced in the history of ODL services delivery. However, existing research evidence has not adequately addressed whether the increase suggest gender parity or not. So the purpose of the proposed study is to find out the extent to which ODL is promoting gender balance.

1.3   Statement of the Problem

In recent years, Tanzania has witnessed the robust expansion of university education as marked by increased number of public universities including the Open University of Tanzania (OUT). This would mean that there is an improved access to higher education. Through OUT, majority of the students receive higher education to cater for their learning needs of which could not be able to get it through a conventional mode due to limited chances. However, evidence prove that compared to their male counterparts, women have, for the most part, attained only low levels of formal education. This tendency has led to widened gap in terms of access to higher education between males and females. Since the establishment of Open University of Tanzania (OUT), there has been an influx of enrolments. While literatures have widely argued on the increased need to access higher education as the reason for

students' massive enrolment in ODL programmes, the issue whether OUT has been promoting gender balance or not has not been addressed adequately. This study strived for this aim.

1.4   Purpose of the Study

This study aimed at examining whether ODL promotes gender balance.

1.5   Objectives of the Study

The study sought to achieve the following objectives.

i)   To examine the characteristics of ODL leaners in terms of gender aggregate at OUT.

ii) To determine the strategies used by OUT to promote gender balance.

iii) To assess the quality of teachers in different faculties at OUT.

iv) To determine gender specific challenges that learners face at OUT.

1.6   Research questions

The study was guided by the following research questions.

i)   What are the gender based characteristics of ODL leaners at OUT?

ii) What are the strategies used by OUT to promote gender balance?

iii) What is the quality of teachers in different faculties at OUT?

iv) What are gender specific challenges that learners face at OUT?

1.7   Significance of the Study

The study, it is hoped to raise awareness to the OUT management of the nature of the leaners studying at OUT. This enables them improve service delivery to cater for

leaners needs. The study also enhances understanding to ODL stakeholders (OUT, policy developers, academicians and government) to strength its policies that guarantee gender balance in ODL courses. Furthermore, the study is significant as the findings may highlight some strategies that can be used to reduce gender imbalance in accessing education. The study provides rich source of information as the findings produce necessary information to researchers interested to carry out related studies.

1.8   Delimitation of the Study

The study was delimited to the role of ODL in promoting gender balance. It was confined to learners, lecturers and directors at Open University of Tanzania (OUT). It was conducted at Kinondoni centre.

1.9   Limitation of the Study

In taking up this study the researcher encountered the following obstacles: Some respondents were not confident to participate fully in the study. An informed consent with respondents was sought and only those who were willing to take part in the study were selected.

Also a language which was most familiar to the respondents was used during data collection process to increase their confidence to participate in the study. And lastly the researcher faced the problem of shortage of time, since lectures and data collection process were going at the same time. Permission was sought from the management to have a research leave in order to have adequate time to collect data.

1.10 Definition of Key Terms

Gender: is a social definition of womanhood and manhood. It is a social attribute which varies with time, place' and culture**.** As a social construct, therefore, gender can be deconstructed.

Gender balance: refers to the way male and female learners have equal access to economic and social services including educational services like access to higher education. OUT can contribute towards transformation of the gender roles through facilitating gender sensitive educational processes.

Open and Distance learning (ODL) is a system of education in which education is imparted to learners who may not be physically present on campus.

1.11 Chapter Summary

This chapter   mainly set the background to the problem that was investigated for the purpose of making it more comprehensible. It stated the objectives for conducting this study and the research questions which guided its direction. Moreover, the chapter presented the significant of this study. It has also presented the delimitations and limitations and to the end dealt with defining the basic terms used in the study.

CHAPTER TWO

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter presents theoretical framework, empirical literature related to this study and conceptual framework. The chapter is sectioned into several parts involving conceptualizing ODL, theories underpinning the practice of distance education, empirical literatures on ODL promoting gender balance, conceptual framework, literature synthesis and research gap and chapter summary.

2.2 Conceptualizing ODL

ODL is a system of education in which education is imparted to learners who may not be physically present on campus (Keegan, 2004). Its philosophy is to remove barriers to education and allow learners to study according to their time, pace and place. ODL also uses technology to mediate learning. In a conventional education system, learners need to attend daily lectures and be present in the campus. Therefore, for a working adult learner, this system will be difficult for them to study and work at the same time. However, in ODL, learners can work and further their education at the same time. Learners are also not required to travel for classes every day (Malaysian Qualifications Ageny, 2011).

ODL as a Mode of Education Delivery in Non-Formal System increases significantly education opportunities for different groups regardless of their gender, age, status or colour (MoEVT, 2013). Such delivery mode is crucial toward the realization of national and international policies and goals, including Education for All (EFA)

goals. It is a type of learning mode whereby a teacher and student are separated by distance, but they may occasionally meet for tutorials (face to face sessions). It should generally be conceived that the philosophy of ODL is adhered to characteristics such as flexibility in terms of age, content, status and educational background.

2.2.1 Benefit of ODL

ODL remains the only viable option for reaching dispersed groups of people in remote areas (Msoffe, 2016).It is also cost-effective and more convenient to learners who cannot leave their work to study on full-time programs as an in-service program, it does not use up working time of learners since they learn as they work (Mahsud & Haider, 2014; Musingafi et al 2015). Chute et al. (1999) list other benefits of distance learning: (1) it allows the training of more people; (2) it can be delivered to home and work sites, which are convenient to students; and (3) it is learner-centered and affords students more control of the pace and the style of learning.

2.3   Theories underpinning the Practice of Open and Distance Learning (ODL)

There exist a number of theories that have greatly impacted the practice of open and distance learning or simply distance education. In this section, much work is centred on three historical approaches to the development of a theory of distance education that were identified by Desmond Keegan (1986). Keegan classified theories of distance education as: theories of independence and autonomy (Wedemeyer and Moore, 1994); theories of industrialization of teaching (Peters, 1988); and theories of interaction and communication (Holmberg). The theories are discussed here below.

2.3.1 Theory of Independence and Autonomy

This theory embraces ideas advanced by Wedemeyer (1981) and Moore (1994). Wedemeyer's theory of Independence study hypothesizes that the essence of distance education is the independence of the student or learner. In this respect the central advocacy of the theory is the use of modern technologies in teaching and learning that guarantee grater learner freedom. Three aspects are reflected in this theory:

Learner independence: Wedemeyer (1981) in his theory emphasises on the learner independence as the main object of distance education. He outlines 6 characteristics that typically reflect independent study systems of distance education. First, the students and teacher are separated. Take for example the system of Open University of Tanzania; the students are not in daily face-to-face contact with their lecturers they are rather separated. Students follow learning while at their areas of residence through correspondence. Second, the normal processes of teaching and learning are carried out in writing or through some other medium. Third, teaching is individualized. Fourth, learning takes place through the students' activity; fifty, learning is made convenient for student in his or her own environment and six the learner takes responsibility for the space of his or her own progress, with freedom to start and stop at any time.

Elements of the teaching and learning situation: Wedemeyer theory of independent study identifies also the elements of every teaching-learning situation. That these constitute: a teacher, a leaner or learners, communication system or mode and

something to be taught or learned. Wedemeyer noted that these elements should be reorganized in such a way to allow greater leaner freedom.

Student-teacher relationship: Wedemeyer argues also that a key to success of distance learning is student-teacher relationship. It is by no doubt that healthier student-teacher relationships in OUT are also significant for desired learning outcomes.

Student independent learning is the salient feature of studying through OUT. Study time has also been made flexible to allow learners time to fulfill their obligation (Bhalalusesa, e.t al., 2009). However, teacher-student interaction in various modes enhances learning through OUT.

2.3.2 Theory of Industrialization of Teaching

This was developed by Otto Peters of Germany (1988). The theory views distance education as an industrialized form of teaching and learning (Schlosser &Simonson, 2006). According to Peters distance education can be analyzed by comparing it to industrial production of goods. In this respect, Peters argued that distance education could not have existed before the industrial era. Influenced by economic and industrial theory Peters adopted the following terminologies as significant in analyzing distance education.

Rationalization: In industrial production, this means use of methodical measures to reduce the required amount of input of power, time and money. In distance

education, Peters, as cited in Schlosser and Simonson (2006) argues that ways of thinking, attitudes and procedures can be found, which only established themselves in the work of increased rationalization in the industrialization of production processes.

***Division of labour*:** This means division of a task into simpler components or sub-tasks. In distance education, the tasks of conveying information, counseling, assessment and recording performance is done by separate individuals. To Peters division of labour is the main prerequisite for the advantages of distance education to become effective.

Mechanization: Mechanization involves the use of machines in the work process. To Peters distance education is impossible without machines. Duplicating machines and transport systems are prerequisites; later forms of distance teaching have the additional facilities of modern means of communication and electronic data processing installations.

***Assembly line*:** This is a method of work in which workers remain stationally, while objects they are working on move past them. In the context of distance education, education programmes, materials for both teacher and student are not the product of an individual, rather instructional materials are designed, printed, stored, distributed and graded by specialists.

Mass production: This means production of good in large quantities. To Peters, in educational context demand outstrips supply especially at colleges and universities.

In this respect, there has been a trend toward large-scale operations not entirely consistent with traditional forms of academic teaching. Mass production of distance courses, however, can enhance quality. Peter's belief in this aspect was that large number of courses produced forced distance teaching organizations to analyze the requirements of potential distance learners more carefully than in conventional teaching thereby improving the quality of the courses.

*Preparatory work***:** Involves determining how workers, machines, and materials can usefully relate to each other during each phase of the production process. Peters had a belief that the success of distance education depended largely on a preparatory phase. The preparatory phase concerns the development of the distance study course and involves experts in the various specialist fields with qualifications often higher than those of other teachers involved in distance study.

Planning: This is the system of decisions that determines an operation before it is carried out. To Peters planning was important in the development phase of distance education, as the contents of correspondence units, from the first to the last. Planning also must be determined in detail, adjusted in relation to each other, and represented in a predetermined number of correspondence units. The importance of planning is even greater when residential study is a component of a distance education program.

*Formalization***:** Refers to creating general or permanent arrangements for purpose-oriented activity. Peters noted the relationship between rational organization and effectiveness of the teaching method. Organization makes it possible for students to

receive exactly predetermined documents at appointed times, for an appropriate university teacher to be immediately available for each assignment sent in, and for consultations to take place at fixed locations at fixed times. Organization, Peters pointed out, was optimized in large distance education programs.

Standardization: Means the limitations of manufacture to a restricted number of types of one product, in order to make products more suitable for their purpose, cheaper to produce, and easier to replace. In distance education, not only is the format of correspondence units standardized, so is the stationary for written communication between student and lecturer, the organizational support, and the academic content. Other terms include change of function, objectification and concentration and centralization.

2.3.3 The theory of interaction and communication

The theory of interaction and communication was developed by Holmberg (1989). The theory calls "guided didactic conversation," and falls into the general category of communication theory. To Holmberg this theory had explanatory value in relating teaching effectiveness to the impact of feelings of belonging and cooperation as well as to the actual exchange of questions, answers, and arguments in mediated communication. Holmberg (1989) theory of interaction and communication which was formulated using the seven background assumptions stated:

> *Distance teaching will support student motivation, promote learning pleasure, and make the study relevant to the individual learner and his/her needs, creating feelings of rapport between the learner and the distance-education institution (its tutors, counselors, etc.), facilitating access to course content, engaging the*

learner in activities, discussions, and decisions, and generally [promoting] helpful real and simulated communication to and from the learner (cited in Schlosser &Simonson, 2006).

To Holmberg this theory indicates essential characteristics of effective distance education. In 1995 Holmberg significantly extended his theory of distance education. The expanded theory (as cited in Schlosser &Simonson, 2006) comprehends the theory just stated above, and stated:

First, distance education serves individual learners who cannot or do not want to make use of face-to-face teaching. These learners are very heterogeneous. Second, distance education means learners no longer have to be bound by decisions made by others about place of study; division of the year into study terms; and vacations, timetables, and entry requirements. Third, distance education thus promotes students' freedom of choice and independence. Fourth, society benefits from distance education, on the one hand, from the liberal study opportunities it affords individual learners, and, on the other hand, from the professional/occupational training it provides. Fifth, distance education is an instrument for recurrent and lifelong learning and for free access to learning opportunities and equity. Sixth, all learning concerned with the acquisition of cognitive knowledge and cognitive skills as well as affective learning and some psychomotor learning are effectively provided for by distance education. Distance education may inspire metacognitive approaches. Seventh, distance education is based on deep learning as an individual activity. Learning is guided and supported by noncontiguous means. Teaching and learning rely on mediated communication, usually based on pre-produced courses. Eighth,

distance education is open to behaviorist, cognitive, constructivist, and other modes of learning. It has an element of industrialization with division of labor, use of mechanical devices, electronic data processing, and mass communication, usually based on pre-produced courses. Ninth, personal relations, study pleasure, and empathy between students and those supporting them (tutors, counselors, etc.) are central to learning in distance education. Feelings of empathy and belonging promote students' motivation to learn and influence the learning favorably. Such feelings are conveyed by students being engaged in decision-making; by lucid, problem-oriented conversation-like presentations of learning matter that may be anchored in existing knowledge; by friendly, noncontiguous interaction between students and tutors, counselors, and other support persons; and by liberal organizational-administrative structures and processes.

According to Holmberg (1995) distance education while being an effective mode of training, it runs the risk of leading to mere fact learning and reproduction of accepted "truths." However, it can be organized and carried out in such a way that students are encouraged to search, criticize, and identify positions of their own. Distance education thus serves conceptual learning, problem solving, and genuinely academic ends (Schlosser &Simonson, 2006).

2.4   Empirical Literature on ODL in Promoting Gender Balance

2.4.1 Characteristics of ODL Learners

Each distance learner has a profile which may be similar to or different from that of others. Holmberg (1995) points out that there is no evidence to indicate that distance

learners should be regarded as a homogeneous group; however as indicated by Gibson (1998) distance learners do share broad demographic and situational similarities that have often provided the basis for profiles of the typical distance learner in higher education. The fact remains that every learner is in certain respects like all other distance learners (DLs); like some other DLs or like no other DLs.

Hanson et al. (1997) argue that earlier profile of distance learners constitutes the following characteristics: correspondence or home study, adult learners with occupational, social, and family commitments. This is of course the classical view of the nature of ODL leaners. The National Home Study Council (NHSC) founded in 1926 as quoted in Dabbagh (2005) collected information about its students and created the following demographic profile for home study students: average age is 34 years, 66% are male, 25% have a college degree, over 50% have had some college education, 75% are married, self-motivated, goal oriented, discipline self-starters, mostly employed and place-bound.

Recent research findings demonstrates that although distance education learners share broad demographic and situational characteristics no concrete evidence indicates that this group is homogeneous or unchanging (Thompson, 1998). In this respect, Dabbagh (2005) identifies the following characteristics of a distance learner in ODL: having a strong academic self-concept, exhibiting fluency in the use of learning technologies, possessing interpersonal and communication skills, understanding and valuing interaction and collaborative learning, possessing an internal locus of control, exhibiting self-directed learning skills and exhibiting a need

for affiliation. Ference and Vockell (1994) noted that ODL learners are adults whose characteristics include: active learning, independent, solution driven, value driven, skill seeking and self-directing.

The ODL learner is an employed professional. Most of ODL students are employed in the Public sector and a few are employed in the private sector including NGO's. This implies that most of students studying in ODL mode come from public sector. The OUT may consider coming up with learner sensitive fees payment schemes given the low salaries paid in the public sector.

The ODL student is a moderate earner. He or she is capable of funding his/her studies as they have consistent income. The student however may be a sensitive spender because their average earning cannot cover issues of the family and studies. The ODL learners therefore must balance their family responsibilities, their academic progression and professional aspirations.

Thompson (1998) argue that characteristics of distance learners profile vary but generally reflect some combination of demographic and situational variables such as age, gender, ethnic background, location and life roles. *Age:* Researches agree that distance education students are an average, older than typical undergraduate students. *Gender:* Most studies of distance learners report that more women than men are enrolled in courses delivered at a distance. *Ethnic background*: evidence show that distance education is an appealing way for students from disadvantaged socio-economic groups to enter higher education. For many of these students, courses and

programmes delivered at a distance are accessible avenue for upward mobility. *Location*: distance education has attracted students whose geographic distance from a higher education institution discouraged or prevented enrollment in on-campus classes. *Life roles*: In addition to filling the role of student most distance learners also fill the role of a worker and spouse.

2.4.2 Access by Gender to Higher Education through ODL Mode

It is evident that ODL institutions all over the world have experienced increased enrolments due to improved access to the internet and the trend towards globalization (Ndudzo & Nyatanga, 2013). India for example, has high and growing enrolments in ODL institutions. Almost 22% of the total number of students enrolled in higher education system pursue their studies through ODL mode (Dikshit, 2003 in Ndudzo & Nyatanga, 2013). Zimbabwe has also experienced increased growth of students' enrolment. In 2003 for example, the Zimbabwe Open University (ZOU) enrolled about 46.9% of the total university enrolment in the country (Ndudzo & Nyatanga, 2013).

Since its inception in 1994, the Open University of Tanzania (OUT) has similarly witnessed an influx of enrolments for both male and female students (Komba, 2009). Evidence proves that between 1994 and 2014 a total of 92, 568 students had been enrolled for OUT services out of which 48,526; 16,940 and 27,558 students were studying undergraduate, post graduate and non-degree programmes respectively (OUT, 2014). More than 47.2% of enrolled students come from OUT regions of Arusha, Dar es salaam, Iringa, Kilimanjaro, Mbeya, Morogoro, Mwanza and Tabora

whose enrolments are more than 2803 students. However, Dar es Salaam stands as an outstanding region with highest enrolments of 10,901 (7255 male and 3646 female) students as compared to other OUT regions (OUT, 2014). Kinondoni centre has the highest cumulative enrolment of 7334 (3984 male and 3350 female) students when compared to other centres of Ilala and Temeke in Dar es Salaam (OUT, 2014). These statistics prove of the growth of ODL as evidenced with enrolment increase. Despite the fact that male enrolment has stood higher than their counterpart female, it is true beyond doubt that it has relatively increased in both. According to Komba (2009) the percentage of female has increased on average from 18.6% in 2001 to 26% in 2005.

However, researches have not taken cognizance of existing gender parity in ODL higher learning institutions. Gender imbalance at the higher level of education is a reflection of and a result of the imbalance in the other lower levels of education (Meena, 1996). This condition is worsened by the fact that majority of the enrolled students are males compared to females.

In all academic years, even though the participation of female in both public and private universities and university colleges has increased, when compared to their counterpart males, their participation has remained relatively lower. This suggests that gender imbalance is still a problem in Tanzanian education system especially higher education. What is even more interesting is the fact that males dominate even those disciplines which would have us believe would be female dominated due to subject biases in the secondary school levels (Meena, 1996). In that sense, studying

whether higher learning institutions are responsive to gender imbalance necessitates for further research interventions.

2.4.3 Strategies Used by ODL to Promote Gender Balance

The gender equality and empowerment of women are regarded as key crosscutting issues in many societies, and thus every sector including education sector ensure that specific needs of women and men, girls and boys in education are addressed through ODL mode of education delivery (SADC, 2008).

In quest for gender balance many ODL institutions have launched gender mainstreaming strategy for open and distance learning with the objective of promoting equql opportunity for staff and students (OUT, 2017) as well as providing a framework for mainstreaming gender in ODL programmes (SADC, 2008). It should be understood that promoting gender balance through ODL will contribute to the development and deployment of effective and harmonious ODL, equal access and achievement for both men and women to quality education and training (SADC, 2008).

Research evidence has proved presence of strategic actions geared to promote gender balance in ODL institutions. A study by Abiodum (2008) identified an array of techniques that can be used to reduce or eliminate the tendencies of marginalization and improve on the experiences and opportunities of women in ODL. The techniques among others include: educating and equipping women to contribute their useful quota to the society and eliminating all forms of illiteracy; institutionalizing greater

dimensions of openness and flexibility; whether in terms of access, curriculum or other element of structure, promoting cost-effective, convenient, conducive and efficient ODL; and enhance skills acquisition and capacity building to enable women develop self-awareness and self-esteem.

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

SADC (2008) developed a gender mainstreaming strategy for ODL. The strategy indorses key strategic intervention areas and strategic actions leading to gender balance in ODL. Below is brief description of two strategic intervention areas related to promotion of gender balance in ODL: intervention area one and intervention area three.

Intervention area 1: policy development, review and harmonization which aims at facilitating the creation of conducive and supportive policy environment for gender mainstreaming in ODL. This initiatives uses the following strategies among others: review or develop ODL policies with a gender perspective; develop a gender policy for education sector with evidence interventions to address gender inequalities in ODL; implement gender policies and affirmative action like 50:50 enrollment policy in ODL to raise female or male participation in tertiary education; facilitate advocacy

campaigns targeted at women to enroll with ODL and facilitate utilization of gender mainstreaming guidelines for ODL institutions.

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

The study by Msoffe (2016) revealed the importance of ODL in promoting gender balance and women empowerment. The study assets that promoting gender equality in ODL enables the institution to have a balanced voice in the management and in students' learning, and thus, can promote more access and quality of education. UNESCO (2002) and Njaya (2015) portray similarly that promoting gender equality in ODL institutions can promote the status of this instruction in the society, where more people will consider it as of value to empower the minorities, bring about democracy and social equality.

2.4.4 Teacher Quality

Meena (1996) places much emphasis on improving teacher quality as a strategic approach to enhance gender balance. In the same way UNESCO (2003) stresses that improving quality is the best measure to achieve access and equality in education. It is argued that improving quality has a positive impact on equality as it makes access to educational opportunities a more attractive option to both male and female learners. Moreover, effort to improve quality will tend to increase the efficiency of the public expenditure and will encourage parents and other educational stakeholders to contribute to education. In this perspective, it is quite clear that teacher quality has a significant role on gender balance in higher learning institutions including ODL institutions. Research evidence has proved on the positive correlation between teacher quality and students achievement in learning institutions. Good teachers produce good students. This is so because the teacher's most important task is to contribute and enhance the learning and achievement of the learners both males and females. It is also argued that teachers who have majored in the subject they teach are better teachers in that subject than those who have not. Pedagogy, especially content-based pedagogy has a positive impact on student achievement, and teachers with considerable experience are likely to make a greater contribution to student learning than teachers with a few years of teaching experience.

Despite the valued significance of good teachers in enhancing access to education that is sensitive to gender, there has been no consensus regarding the standards that define teacher quality. Goe and Stickler (2008) argue that teacher quality is often difficult to interpret, given the many ways of identifying and measuring the

qualifications, characteristics, and practices that contribute to the concept of what makes a good teacher. For example, Goe's (2007) examination of teacher quality focuses on four category of quality indicators. These include: teacher qualifications, teacher characteristics, teacher practices, and teacher effectiveness. Their finding summarizes the following category that constitutes teacher quality indicators.

Table 2.1: Four Lenses for Examining Teacher Quality

Category	Definition and example indicators
Teacher Qualification	*Credentials, knowledge, and experiences that teachers bring with them when they enter the classroom, such as*: Coursework, grades, subject-matter education, degrees, test scores, experience, certification(s), and evidence of participation in continued learning (e.g., internships, induction, supplemental training, and professional development)
Teacher characteristics	*Attitudes and attributes that teachers bring with them when they enter the classroom, such as*: Expectations for students, collegiality or a collaborative nature, race, and gender
Teacher practices	*Classroom practices teachers employ, that is, the ways in which teachers interact with students and the teaching strategies they use to accomplish specific teaching tasks, such as:* Aligning instruction with assessment, communicating clear learning objectives and expectations for student performance, providing intellectual challenge, allowing students to explain what they are learning, using formative assessment to understand what and the degree to which students are actually learning, offering active learning experiences, subscribing to cohesive sets of best teaching practices
Teacher effectiveness	A value-added assessment of the degree to which teachers who are already in the classroom contribute to their students' learning, as indicated by higher-than-predicted increases in student achievement scores

Source: Goe and Stickler (2008)

A study by Komba, Anangisye and Katabaro (2008) outlines the following several attributes as essential in defining and characterizing teacher quality. These include: training and/or education, professional certification, professional experience,

adherence to professional code of conduct, membership in professional identity and humility. The other attributes characterizing teacher professional identity include loving the teaching job, loving the students and serving as role models to the students, other teachers and the community at large. It can be argued that teacher quality is contextual and diverse. For example, in analyzing the quality of academic staff in government and non-government universities and university colleges MoEVT (2014) uses certificate and education only as shown in table 2.1.

2.4.5 Reasons Why Learners Choose ODL Mode of Study

Literature has reported quite extensively on the reasons as to why learners opt for ODL mode. A study by Ndudzo and Nyatanga (2013) report that students opting for ODL mode because of diverse reasons which include the following:

Accessibility: Most of learners are dwelling in regions where they can access easily the OUT Regional Centre. The ODL institutions should note on this strength and therefore should equip the Regional Centres with state of the art equipment and other learner support services to attract more distance learners. Also students have access to application forms. They obtain them easily as it can be downloaded from the internet or purchased from Regional Centres. Lastly, it is argued that entry qualifications for ODL programmes are reasonable as compared to conventional programmes (Ndudzo &Nyatanga, 2013).

Affordability: Students choose ODL because the cost of study is cheaper than in conventional institutions. The fees structure attracts students to enroll into ODL

programmes. The payment structures are so convenient such that students can make staggered payments (Ndudzo &Nyatanga, 2013).

Convenience: ODL is more lucrative because of its convenience. Students are attracted to it because it is a mode of education that allows them to learn while they attend to other responsibilities. The earlier findings of this study indicated that majority of ODL students are married and employed at the same time. These and other responsibilities require a mode of learning that is sensitive and tailored to meet the requirements of married professionals. Employed professionals indicated that they primarily chose to study through ODL because it allows them to study while on their jobs (Ndudzo &Nyatanga, 2013).

Flexibility: Employed professionals may be moved occasionally as part of their work. Studies indicate that learners are attracted to ODL because their education is not adversely affected by temporary migration which takes place as a result of job transfers. Furthermore, flexibility and convenience of ODL regarding study time attracts them. Also ODL flexibility on the speed required when pursuing degree and diploma programmes attract learners study through ODL mode (Ndudzo & Nyatanga, 2013).

2.4.6 Gender Specific Challenges that Learners in ODL Institutions Face

There is a clear understanding that male and female distance learners bring different ideas, expectations and experiences to a distance education class. Research evidence provides a range of barriers and challenges which are gender specific.

The Challenge of Technology: The technology required to participate in distance education can be a substantial barrier for female students. According to Blum (1998) females have higher technical barriers. In a study of computer mediated communication, Blum (1998) found that females asked more technical questions than men (66% of technical questions were asked by women). The messages expressed concern with the course software, locating information on the Web, general computer related concerns, and the fast pace of online courses. Gudhlanga, Magadza and Mafa (2012) hold similar view as they point to women phobia to ICT. They comment that the challenge faced most elderly female students as they lack skills to manipulate computers in search of information.

The Challenge of Addressing Learning Styles: In additional to the technology divide, men and women also have very distinct methods of learning and knowing. Research evidence prove that women benefit more than men from interaction in a learning situation and that this factor puts them at a disadvantage in distance education (Potter, 1998). This need for connectedness in their learning is an indication of a woman's different learning style that emphasizes relationships, empathy, listening, collaboration and cooperation instead of competition.

The Challenge of Communication Styles: There are also important differences in communication styles between men and women in distance education environments that can be disadvantageous to women. Men in distance education settings are aggressive and want to be in control while women are more focused on cooperation and positive interaction and are more supportive of their colleagues (Morahan-

Martin, 1998). Many studies of online discussion forums found that males monopolize online conversations both in length and frequency of their postings and that they ignore or trivialize females and are more confrontational (Kramarae, 2001).

The Challenges of Work, Family and Support: The biggest barriers women face to learning in a distance education setting deal with the other commitments in their already busy lives. While distance learning provides convenient opportunities for women to learn, it also creates a "third shift," a phrase coined by the AAUW's Cheris Kramarae (2001). When women are done for the day juggling the demands of being a spouse, a mother, and an employee, they squeeze in another layer of distance education responsibilities during the "third shift" either very early in the morning or late at night. At the same time that distance education decreases the barriers related to distance and time, it also puts an added burden on women. Economic demands require many women to work outside the home. To raise their status and/or their pay, they seek higher education during the "third shift," which allows them to continue their education without having to give up other responsibilities.

A study by Opong, Dhatrogah, and Prosper (2008), and Gudhlanga, Magadza and Mafa (2012) revealed similarly that woman multiple roles were a big challenge to women in ODL classes. This challenge was linked to the women's traditional role of caring for the home and the family. The study pointed out that it becomes difficult to concentrate on one's studies ignoring the family. Difficulties were encountered in attending tutorials, consulting tutors and attending discussion groups. Other challenges include time constraint, financial constraint and technophobia.

A study by Dodo (2013) on challenges faced by students learning in virtual and Open Distance learning system revealed a myriad of challenges affecting the students ranging from financial, personal commitment, time, stereotypes, and social and work pressures.

Similarly, a more recent study conducted by Musingafi, Mapuranga, Chiwanza and Zabron (2015) found out that ODL learners were challenged with a range of obstacles in their course of studies. The most reported challenges were lack of sufficient time for study, difficulties in access and use of ICT, ineffective feedback and lack of study materials.

In fact the constraints identified above have to some extent negatively affected both the delivery of the programme and the pass rate of the students.

2.5 Conceptual Framework

The framework for this study is a result of researcher's conception having visited different theoretical and related literature. The framework involves relationship between ODL gender policy in promoting gender balance both among students and members of academic staff. Other components of the conceptual frame work include the factors that attract learners into ODL programmes and gender balance indicators (number of males and females enrolled in OUT and teacher quality by gender). The researcher has an assumption that appropriate gender policy of OUT is capable of promoting gender balance that manifests itself on the gender balance indicators which involves number of males and female of learners and academic staff employed

at OUT. However, the number of learners and academic staff is influenced with several other factors which are capable of attracting them study or work through OUT. The variables can be diagrammatically shown as follows in the figure below
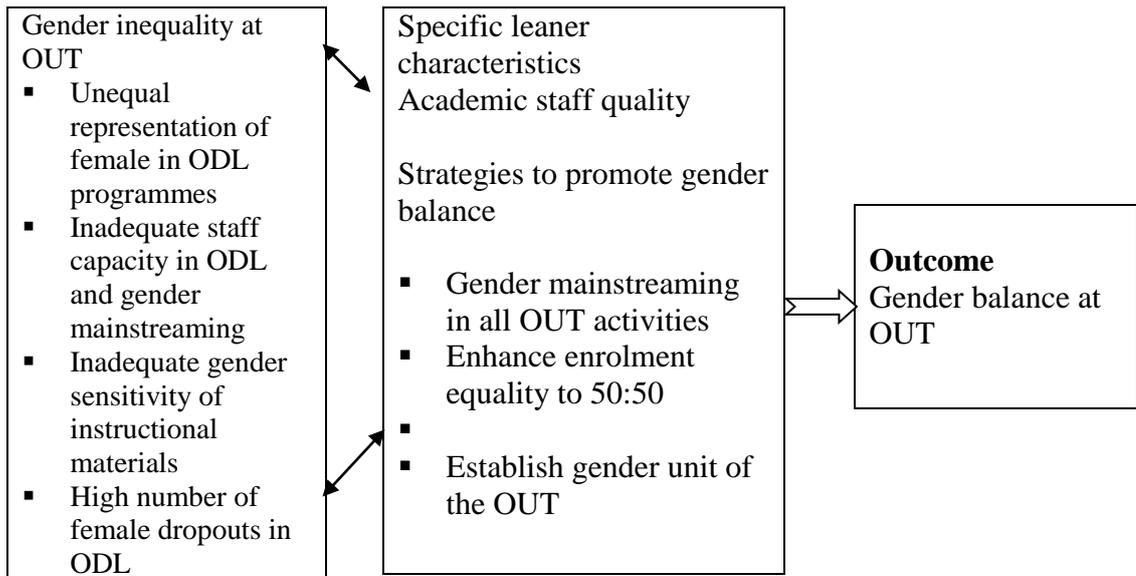
Figure 2.1: A Conceptual Framework for Studying How OUT Promotes Gender Balance

Source (Adopted in Mosha, 2006)

2.6 Literature Synthesis and Research Gap

In the literature review above, it has been put clear that ODL mode of education delivery constitute imparting education to learners who may not necessary on campus. Three historical approaches to the development of a theory of distance education have been identified and have influenced this study. Theories of distance education include: theories of independence and autonomy (Wedemeyer and Moore); theories of industrialization of teaching (Peters); and theories of interaction and communication (Holmberg). Empirical literatures have widely revealed the increased

enrolment through ODL mode of education delivery. Research evidences have also reported on the reasons as to why learners choose ODL mode at the expense of conventional mode. Apparently related studies above have not indicated whether the influx of enrolments within ODL institutions suggests that ODL promotes gender balance or not. This study therefore strives to fill this gap.

2.7   Chapter Summary

This chapter has revolved around the theoretical perspectives that have impacted the open and distance learning and which greatly informed this study. It has also reviewed related literatures that shed light to the present study. To the end the gap for which this study was grounded is shown.

CHAPTER THREE

3.0 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1   Introduction

This section provides descriptions on how the study was carried out. It is divided into ten sections involving research approach, study design, area of study, target population and sample size, sampling techniques, data collection methods, data analysis techniques, trustworthiness of the findings and ethical issues.

3.2   Research Approach

This study used qualitative research approach. The research gathered required data from the narratives gained from the open questionnaire and interviews with lecturers and centre director. Also FGDs with the students were conducted. In that sense the researcher interacted directly with respondents in the real context of OUT at Kinondoni centre where they pursued their studies to access first hand and detailed information.

In order to find out the gender of OUT students, the information of students' gender was used whereas data unveiling region/district name to which student belong to, cater the purpose of verifying the University's stance of widening the access to education all over the Tanzanians.

3.3   Research Design

The case study design was used to guide the study. This was for the sake of detailed explanation through qualitative research giving reasons why male and female leaners

select ODL mode of education delivery (Cresswell, 2012). The reason behind is that the researcher wants to understand what attracts female and male learners study at OUT using Kinondoni centres. Typically, the embedded case study designed was adopted.

3.4   Area of the Study

The study was conducted at the Open University of Tanzania. It mainly covered one OUT centre which was Kinondoni in Dar es Salaam region. Dar es Salaam region was purposely chosen as the study area because had high population of 10901 (7255 males and 3646 females) students enrolled to pursue higher studies through ODL mode (OUT, 2014). It had three centres of Ilala, Kinondoni and Temeke unlike other regions in the country which had only one OUT regional centre. Kinondoni had a relatively high enrolment of 1255 (651 males, 604 females), 1367 (715 males, 652 females) and 1627 (857 males, 770 females) in the years 2011/12, 2012/13, and 2013/14 respectively. This was followed by Ilala centre whose enrolments were 714 (394males, 320 females), 706 (401 males, 305 females) and 431 (228 males, 203 females) in the same years (OUT, 2014). In that sense, Dar es Salaam stood a better chance to offer needed information to fulfill the purpose of the study, that is, exploring whether OUT promoted gender balance or not.

3.5   Target Population and Sample Size

The target population for this study was all students studying at OUT, all OUT centres directors and all lecturers who taught at OUT centres in Dar es Salaam region. It was anticipated that learners at OUT were to provide relevant data on

whether OUT promoted gender balance or not. Lecturers teaching at OUT were involved in the study because they interacted with learners in classes, so had knowledge of the nature of the learners they taught, guided and counseled. OUT Centre Directors were involved since they were the ones supervising OUT centres. So they had rich information regarding the nature of learners enrolled. They provided data to cross validate information given by learners and other respondents.

3.6   Sample Size

The study employed 51 respondents sampled from Kinondoni centre. The sample involved 40 learners, 10 lecturers and 1 director. The sample size was large enough to yield acceptable results for the study. The composition of the sample is shown in the table 3.1 below.

Table 3.1: Sample Composition

SNO.	OUT Centres	Sample Composition			
		Learners	Lecturers	Directors	Total
01	Kinondoni	40	10	1	51

3.7   Sampling Procedure

The following sampling techniques were employed in the proposed study to obtain key informants needed for the study.

3.7.1 Snowball Sampling

Snowball sampling was used to involve leaners studying at Kinondoni OUT centre. The researcher believed that learners possessed similar characteristics to lecturers and centre director. They were knowledgeable of the state of gender phenomenon at

OUT and hence could give credible information as beneficiaries. However, given the nature of study at OUT, it was difficult to find them at one point, they were very staggered. During interview sessions with and FGDs with learners the researcher asked participants for names of learners could also provide credible information regarding the research problem. Fourty (40) learners were sampled through this technique. The purpose was to increase the validity of the findings by having adequate taste of the informants (Dawn, 2007; Ary et al., 2010).

3.7.2 Stratified Sampling

This technique was employed to ensure that the sample was well presented gender wise. Here male and female strata were prepared at Kinondoni OUT centre and then a simple random sampling was implemented in each stratum to obtain a given number of subjects in proportion to their total number in a stratum (Enon, 1999; Kothari, 2004; Taylor, Sinha & Ghoshal, 2011).

3.7.3 Purposive Sampling

This was used to obtain information rich informants and these were OUT centre director and lecturers. By virtual of their position at OUT, they were day to day supervisors and implementers of OUT services at their centres. Hence they possessed credible information needed by the study (Enon, 1995).

3.8   Data Collection Methods

A triangulation of three methods was used to facilitate the collection of data needed for the study. An open-ended questionnaire was administered to OUT directors and

lecturers. The questionnaires were designed using English language. A structured interview was also used to access opinions from students, lecturers and centre director for research question 3. The interview schedule was designed in English. It comprised a list of structured questions/ topics that guided the interview sessions. During the interview sessions a researcher requested consent from participants to record the conversations to assist later analysis.

However, findings from the interview were translated in English during analysis process. Documentary review was used to capture secondary data found in varied documents including OUT registry books, OUT journals and research reports.

3.9 Data Analysis Techniques

After finalizing the data collection process, the next step was data analysis. Content Analysis was used to analyze qualitative data gathered through interviews, focus group discussions, documentary review. It involved identifying common ideas in the recorded materials or documented notes and organizing all the information into emerging themes (Kombo & Tromp, 2006; Fraenkel & Wallen, 2010).

The process involved three stages. First the voluminous raw data was reduced and transformed into manageable forms to enhance understanding and to draw out various themes and patterns. Second data patterns and themes were organized using data display tables to ease analytical conclusions be made. Lastly, conclusions were made basing on patterns of data displayed and verifications of the conclusion were made using evidence from other researchers (Berg, 2001).

3.10 Trustworthiness of the Data

In order to ensure quality results for this inquiry rigor was to be enhanced. In this respect, credibility, dependability and confirmability were enhanced using different techniques as described here below.

3.10.1 Credibility

In order to ensure that results of the study were congruent with reality the researcher ensured credibility. This was through use of triangulation of methods and via data sources. With triangulation of methods the study employed different methods of data collection which involved Open questionnaire, interview, FGDs, and documentary review. It was believed that each data collection method had its own weaknesses and strengths. Hence the use of different methods in concert helped to compensate for their individual limitations and exploit their respective benefits.

Regarding enhancement of credibility via data sources the researcher involved the use of a wide range of informants. These were OUT learners at Kinondoni centre, lecturers and centre director. Individual viewpoints and experiences were verified against others and finally the rich picture of their attitudes was constructed based on the contributions they gave. Additionally, the researcher also made a bold attempt to examine previous research findings and finally assessed the degree to which the current study results were congruent with those of past studies.

3.10.2 Dependability

In order to address dependability issue the researcher firstly made use of overlapping methods including open questionnaire, interview, FGDs, and documentary review.

This was in essence to obtain a better, more substantive picture of reality about the problem under study and also served to verify the results obtained.

3.10.3 Confirmability

In ensuring that study findings were the product of the focus of the inquiry and not of the researcher, attempts were made to ensure that study results emanated from the experiences and ideas of the informants. In that sense triangulation of different data collection methods was technically adopted to reduce preferences of the researcher. Furthermore, in creating meanings the researcher was keen in explaining the reasons for the beliefs underpinning decisions made and methods adopted.

3.11 3.11   Ethical Consideration

The researcher stuck to various ethical aspects. This included: Observing protocol, obtaining respondents' informed consent, and observing right to privacy.

Observing protocol: The permission to conduct this study was obtained from the authorities.

Informed consent: Participation to the study was on voluntary basis. An informed consent was sought to the participants and only those who were willing were sampled for the study.

Confidentiality: To ensure confidentiality, the researcher ensured that the instruments bores no names of respondents and that data collected were limited to only those who were concerned and not otherwise.

3.12 Chapter Summary

This chapter has presented methodological issues constituting research approach, study design and study area. Issues of target population, sample size and sampling strategies have adequately been covered. Furthermore, the chapter has also presented the data collection and analysis techniques which were employed to capture required data and analyze them accordingly. To the end, the chapter has dealt with issues of rigor and ethical considerations which were observed in this study.

CHAPTER FOUR

4.0 DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

4.1   Introduction

This chapter presents the data collected from the study. The aim of this study was to explore the role of Open and Distance Learning (ODL) in promoting gender balance. The study was guided by four objectives which are organized into four sections according to four research questions. The first section of the chapter, 4.2, presents demographic information of the research participants. The second section, 4.3, presents data on gender based characteristics of ODL leaners at OUT. The third section 4.4, presents data on strategies used by OUT to promote gender balance, the fourth section, 4.5 is about quality of academic staff in different faculties at OUT. The fifth section, 4.6 presents data on gender specific challenges that learners face at OUT. The last section, 4.7 part about chapter summary

4.2   Demographic Information of the Respondents

This section presents data on demographic characteristics of respondents who took part in a study and their implications on gender promotion at OUT. Demographic information was captured using four aspects. These involved gender, education level, age and marital status. The Table 4.1 summarizes information regarding demographic characteristics.

Table 4.1 shows that there were more males than females, concerning educational level, majority of respondents were diploma holders 30 (59%). This imply that majority of respondents who took part in the study were OUT learners.

Table 4.1: Demographic Information of the Respondents

SNO.	Demographic characteristics	Labels	Percentage (%)
01	Gender	a) Male b) Female	28(55%) 23(45%)
02	Education	a) Diploma b) First degree c) Masters d) PhD	30(59%) 13(25%) 7(13) 1(3%)
03	Age	a) 25-34 b) 35-45 c) 46-60 d) 61+	16(31) 29(57%) 6(12%)
04	Marital status	a) Single b) Married	10(20%) 41(80%)

These mainly reflected members of the academic staff with diverse qualifications who participated in the study. That is PhD, masters and tutorial assistants. Age wise, majority of respondents were aged between 35 to 45 years (29 57%).The findings imply generally that respondents who took part in the study were mainly at the middle age. Regarding marital status, majority respondents were married (80%). All these features are a typical of the ODL learner.

4.3 Gender Based Characteristics of ODL Leaners at OUT

The first objective for this study sought to examine gender based characteristics of ODL learners at OUT. The assumption behind was the need to understand the nature of learners who study at OUT. Understanding gender characteristics was crucial in determining whether or not ODL was promoting gender balance. Two sub-questions were used to capture needed data for this objective. The open-ended questionnaire and FGDs were administered to Centre Director and lectures to capture needed data. The findings are logically organized into two sections, as per the two sub-questions.

4.3.1 Specific Characteristics of Female Learners at OUT

10 lecturers and 1 Center director at Kinondoni center filled in an open-ended questionnaire. Also documents on students' enrolment were reviewed to provide relevant information. It was found out that female learners studying at OUT had diverse characteristics.

It was disclosed that majority of female learners are married with family responsibilities. They were also aged above 35 and government employees. It is also portrayed that female learners had high dropout rate. Generally, results suggest that female learners at OUT were elderly learners with family responsibilities. The attributes suggest also the reasons as to why they decided to choose ODL mode of education delivery other than the convention mode.

Focus Group Discussions with OUT learners and interviews with lecturers and Centre Director at Kinondoni centre support the results from the questionnaire. About 40 learner participants were involved in the focus group discussions. Also 5 lecturers and 1 centre director participated in the interview sessions. Below are the verbatim quotations in support of the female characteristics identified by an open-ended questionnaire.

Marital relationship: Married meant living with a husband/wife. OUT learners pointed out that most female learners were married. They were living with a husband, children and other relatives. If without a husband, either divorced or widowed. One female learner in FGD had the following to say:

> *...in fact when looking the nature of OUT female learners by average majority are married women, they have husbands and children...even if living alone now, either the husband divorced her or widowed. So she has a family (children) to take care...In that sense you can see the series of responsibilities these learners have. Studying and taking care of the family... (FGD with OUT learners at Kinondoni centre on 03rd May 2016)*

Similarly, another learner noted:

> *...female learners at OUT are women with family responsibilities...are married women whom upon family responsibilities have decided to progress academically through the system that support them not to separate from their families...thus, they have decided to study through ODL mode so that they continue with family responsibilities including taking care of the family (FGD with OUT learners at Kinondoni centre on 03rd May 2016)*

The above findings imply that learners at OUT are engaged in marriage life. This indeed suggests a range of responsibilities these learners have. It could also be argued that it is this status that forced them to choose ODL mode of study. Majority women would feel it difficult to leave their family for studies.

Aged above 35: Principally, ODL mode of learning is more independent. A committed and disciplined learner who can work under minimal supervision is the one who could excel well through this system. At age of 35 or so, many women already have engaged in family responsibilities. In that sense, studying at this age requires a system that supports dual responsibilities. That is studying at the same time fulfilling family responsibilities. ODL mode has been a friendly system to majority women who bore family responsibilities to progress academically without affecting family responsibilities. In a FGD with OUT learners at Kinondoni centre, it

was disclosed that age-wise female learners studying at OUT are characteristically elderly learners. Learners claimed that while their age varied substantially, by average, their age is 35 and above. One learner commented on the issue as follows:

> *...If you look at female learners studying at OUT certainly majority of them are have varied years of age. However, by average their age range between 35 and above. This does not mean that we haven't younger learners at OUT, we have... [mmh]...but the fact is that a big number are elderly learners. It should be understood that at age of 35 or so it is hard to secure a place to study through conventional mode. So majority opt for ODL mode...also at this age learners are almost engaged in family responsibilities. They feel it challenging to leave their families for studies away (FGD with learners at Kinondoni Centre on 5th May 2016)*

Another pointed:

> *Madam researcher...look at my age... I'm only left with five years to retire. We are many learners at my status. They tell us that education has no end, that's why you can see me here. I'm struggling at this age to increase my income at retirement (FGD with learners at Kinondoni Centre on 5th May 2016)*

The above findings concur with the findings of Thompson (1998) who established that distance education students are on average, older than typical undergraduate students. Ference and Vockell (1994) noted similarly that ODL learners are adults.

Employment status: Majority learners who participated in FGD at Kinondoni Centre were government employees. Most of them were primary and secondary school teachers working in Dar es Salaam. Some were public servants working in different ministries and city councils. The results imply that OUT gives opportunity for professional development for majority of public servants in various cadres. It was established that upon attending various courses they accessed knew knowledge and skills which help them perform better in their jobs. One learner noted:

> *...a big number of the learners here at OUT are government employees...We use this advantage to develop our career while working. We attend and perform our duties and responsibilities as usual and after working ours we attend lessons. During examinations we request for permission from the management of the institutions we are working (FGD with learners at Kinondoni Centre on 5th May 2016)*

A director of the OUT centre at Kinondoni also disclosed similarly that learners who study at his centre majority were government employed workers. He commented:

> *...although OUT is open for all Tanzanians and non-Tanzanians to access higher education, the government workers have for a quite long time been our esteemed customers. Our university has been receiving a good number of learners, majority of them are public workers from government offices and institutions... I can say that through OUT we have capacitated the government to deliver services to the public...we have trained and we are training them in new knowledge and skills such that they are able to handle their tasks...our learning system is very friendly to learners. Learners have opportunity to access higher education while working (Interview with OUT Centre Director at Kinondoni on 10th May 2016)*

The findings above echo the findings from the study by Ndudzo and Nyatanga (2013) that ODL learner is an employed professional. Most of ODL students are employed in the Public sector and a few are employed in the private sector including NGO's. This implies that most of students studying in ODL mode come from public sector.

Completion rate: This study established that the number of female learners who graduated was relatively low by the end of duration of study. Majority who enrolled did not all graduate. Some dropped in the course of their study with several reasons. A big challenge was family responsibilities. A centre director explained thusly:

> *...the completion rate among females is relatively low. We see majority of male graduating in good numbers yearly. During*

> *registration a relatively good number of female tend to enroll in different programmes...experience show that at graduation the number of graduates differ from the number of those who enrolled in the programme...the number is quite small as some tend to have dropped before graduation. Completion rate among female is low with several reason...one being family responsibilities which lead to delayed graduation and dropout. (Interview with centre director on 10th May 2016)*

The above findings suggest need for OUT to see the better way to increase the completion rate of female learners. Otherwise promotion of gender at OUT will remain a challenge.

Dropout rate: Interview with one lecturer established that female learners studying at OUT were prone to drop out before finishing the last year of their study. This is what he explained:

> *...compared to male learners, female learners have low completion rate. Majority of them drop out before graduating...In my view several factors contribute to high dropout rate among female learners...[mhh]...female learners have a lot of responsibilities including taking care of families. Others come from low income earning families and are engaged in other work responsibilities. These in fact discourage female learners to fulfill their ambition (Interview with a lecturer on 10th May 2016)*

A centre director revealed the same perception. He commented that:

> *...a disadvantage attribute among female learners is their tendency to drop out... Most of them do not finish their studies. Apart from studying have family commitments. In case family responsibilities become a barrier to their study they opt to drop out (Interview with centre director on 10th May 2016)*

In summary, female learners at OUT characteristically are married with family responsibilities, aged above 35, in-service learners, have low completion rate and experience high dropout rate.

4.3.2 Specific Characteristics of Male Learners at OUT

The study also sought to establish OUT learners characteristics which were specific to males. An open questionnaire revealed that male learners at OUT were married and with family responsibilities, aged above 35, hold full time jobs, have high completion rate, and a relatively low dropout. The findings from the questionnaire were further confirmed with verbatim from interviews and FGDs as shown here below.

Marital relationship: In the interview with lecturers, it was established that male learners at OUT are married and therefore have family commitments. One lecturer said:

> *...with my teaching experience majority of my male learners are married. In that sense, have family responsibilities. This causes them not to follow smoothly their studies...see for example if a child is suffering a learner cannot study, if he/she has children studying to secondary school they fail to pay on time their tuition fee (Interview with a lecturer at Kinondoni on 11th May 2016)*

Aged above 35: The interview with Centre Director indicated that age wise, male learners studying at OUT constituted majority aging above 35. It was further indicated that this group was characterized by a desire to grow professionally or increase their income (salaries). The Centre Director pointed out that:

> *...principally male learners at OUT are elderly learners...some of these learners are internally motivated to grow professionally, others just struggle for exciting salaries and others seek to improve performance of their job assignments. So they use the advantage of studying through ODL mode to ensure that they study while working (Interview with Centre Director 12th May 2016)*

Interview with lecturers at OUT established further that majority of learners at OUT were at the age that demanded better salaries of good pensions at retirement rather than seeking new employments. This is what one lecturer had to comment:

> ...In fact OUT receives majority learners who are already employees somewhere else in government or private sectors. So you can feel that age wise they are elderly learners... have struggled a lot and have secured employment, but now they are used to their jobs but struggle for better salaries through advancing more their education. You can wonder, some are at the age of retirement... but have enrolled with OUT simply they want to improve their retirement packages (Interview with a lecturer at Kinondoni centre on 12th May 2016)

These results imply that most of male learners were studying for status quo and improvement of job performance. They enrolled in ODL programme for increase of their monthly income.

Employment status: Interview with lecturers established that male learners were employed. They had jobs either in public or private institutions. They pursued higher studies for improving job performance. One lecturer commented:

> Unlike the convention mode of education delivery, male learners at OUT hold full jobs. Majority are employed with public or private institutions. So, learners work at the same time attending classes. I can say that learning through OUT is worker friendly...people do not bother to travel far leaving work and family responsibilities (interview with a lecturer at Kinondoni on 11th May 2016).

Similarly, a learner in a FGD had the following to say:

> ...thanks to OUT had it not been in place it could be difficult to workers especially in public institutions to advance academically. With OUT workers can study at the same time working. Their job assignments are not interfered...myself I'm a teacher at Pugu secondary school, I'm studying but still teaching at my school...(FGD with learners at Kinondoni centre on 5th may 2016).

The above results suggest that most of OUT learners were not job seekers rather learners who studied to increase knowledge for better job performance. Others were studying for status quo and increase of salary. Study for increase for pension could be another factor. This means study just to increase their pension upon retirement.

Completion rate: In examining learner characteristics specific to males at OUT, high completion rate was perceived by respondents as a feature typical of male learners. In the interview with lecturers and Centre Director, it was established that OUT had good numbers of male learners who were graduating in various courses offered by OUT unlike their counterpart female learners. It was disclosed that male learners were relatively tolerant to the hard conditions of studying through ODL mode. One lecturer said that:

> *...male learners are tolerant...despite of all work and family responsibilities... they struggle to the end of their courses. They never give up. This is the reason that completion rate among male learners is high. This does not, however, mean that male learners do not drop out...they do but the rate is very low in comparison to female learners (Interview with lecturers at Kinondoni centre on 11th may 2016)*

A Centre Director had the same perception. He reported of high completion rate among male learners compared to female learners. This is what he argued:

> *...I'm serving as centre director here for four years now. In my capacity I have experienced male learners doing well in their studies. When both male and female learners got enrolled, experience suggests that male learners are likely to graduate in good numbers...but a good number of female learners tend to drop out before completing their studies (Interview with Centre Director on 12th May 2016)*

In a nutshell, the findings imply that male learners though do not differ much with female learners characteristically, at least it can be argued that they are tolerant

hardworking, and self-directed. This could be some of the reasons for their relatively high completion rate.

4.4   Strategies used by OUT to Promote Gender Balance

The second research objective focused on determining the strength of the strategies used by OUT to promote gender balance**.** The strategies were identified through examining actions or initiatives done by OUT which were geared towards enhancing gender balance. The following strategies were identified as commonly used at OUT: Establishment of gender unit of the OUT, enhance enrolment equality to 50:50, gender mainstreaming in all OUT activities.

4.4.1 Establishment of gender unit of the OUT

It was strongly affirmed that determined to ensure gender balance OUT had launched gender unit whose aim was ensuring that OUT observes and maintains equal opportunity for all. Interview with one lecturer at Kinondoni centre revealed the following:

> *OUT has always committed to promote gender balance. Practically to reach this end it has launched a gender unit with a motive to promote equal opportunities for staff and students and also mainstreaming gender programmes (Interview with a lecturer at Kinondoni centre on 13th May 2016).*

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

> *...the gender unit of OUT has really been instrumental in bringing equality. Take for example, it has been supporting both female and male staff members in terms of recruitment, leadership, promotion*

as well in knowledge and skill advice and counselling about gender related issues that may affect their academic life…the unit has been implementing several activities geared to promote gender balance for example coordinating and facilitating the eradication of gender based violence and engage stake holders through meetings, conferences and advocacy workshops (Interview with a centre director at Kinondoni centre on 12th May 2016).

The above results depict practically that OUT has been very sensitive to gender issues.

4.4.2 Enhance Enrolment Equality to 50:50

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

…for many years since the establishment of OUT, enrollment of male students outstripped that of female. Following the establishment of gender policy OUT has been quite sensitive to 50:50 policy that target to raise women enrollment to equal that of males. The effect of this policy has been a notable increase in enrollment of female learners enrolled with OUT. However, this a long journey since enrollment has not reached to 50:50 (FGD with learners at Kinondoni centre on 5th may 2016).

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

…unlike the past years, OUT has recently experienced increased enrollment due to sensitization on gender related issues and improved access to internet…the percentage of female has increased on average from 18.6% to 26%. We are now witnessing a good number of female enrolling into various programmes (Interview with a centre director at Kinondoni centre on 12th May 2016).

Implied from the above findings is that the past gender gap has been narrowed with increase of female enrollment in OUT related academic programmes.

4.4.3 Gender Mainstreaming in all OUT

Study findings indicate that OUT has ensured gender mainstreaming in all its activities in bold attempt to promote gender balance. The lecturers in an interview session depicted that in almost all OUT activities the concept of gender has been incorporated to sensitize OUT community with gender issues. Take for example most programmes at OUT, communication, information sharing and networking and OUT gender policy are gender responsive geared to address gender inequality at OUT.

4.5   Quality of Academic Staff in Different Faculties at OUT

The second research question explored the quality of academic staff in different faculties at OUT. The quality was measured through the level of education, the disposition toward learners and sensitivity towards gender issues. In that sense clear knowledge of the academic staff was so important in determining whether OUT was redressing gender imbalances or not. Thus, to access needed information documentary review, interviews and FGDs were administered to lectures, centre directors and OUT learners respectively. The findings are organized logically into four sub-sections.

4.5.1 Academic staff by qualification/education level

With this aspect, the study sought to establish the status of academic staff at OUT professionally. The purpose was to establish the qualifications of academic staff. .

Institutional documents and interviews with lecturers and Centre director established that Kinondoni OUT centre had members of the academic staff who possessed different levels of education. There were members of academic staff with PhD, masters and first degree. However, holders of masters' degree and tutorial assistants were relatively many in number compared to PhD holders. This suggests that OUT managed to employ energetic and dynamic staff. Table 4.2 below summarizes data on academic staff qualifications at Kinondoni OUT centre.

Table 4.2: Members of Academic Staff at Kinondoni Centre by Qualifications

Year	PhD			Masters			First degree			Total		
	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T
2011/12	2	-	2	2	5	7	-	6	6	4	11	15
2013/14	3	1	4	2	5	7	-	5	5	5	11	16
2014/15	3	-	3	2	5	7	-	1	1	5	6	11
Total	8	1	9	6	15	21		12	12	14	28	42

Source: Director Kinondoni Centre (2016)

Interview with lecturers and Centre director confirmed data from the documents. It was strongly affirmed that OUT possessed members of academic staff with three kinds of academic qualification: PhD holders, master's degree, and first degree holders who served as tutorial assistants. One lecturer in an interview pointed out that:

> *...OUT possesses a number of master degree holders, doctors and professors teaching various courses offered by OUT. In fact these qualifications are relevant and justify that the kind of education offered to learners at OUT is relevant and acceptable at national and global standards (Interview with a lecturer at Kinondoni centre on 13th May 2016)*

Another lecturer added that OUT gave opportunity for members with low academic qualifications (first degree and masters) to advance academically through granting

them opportunity and scholarships. This was inquest to have highly qualified academic staff to offer quality Open distance education. This is what he explained.

> *...tutorial assistants, assistant lecturers and lectures are trying their best to educate themselves though by large through their own efforts and initiatives...tutorial assistants have reached a level of masters, some of them have gone further to acquire PhD also some assistant lecturers have gone further to a level of PhD (Interview with a lecturer at Kinondoni centre on 13th May 2016).*

Similarly, another lecturer commented that:

> *Professional development opportunities are regularly available to the members of academic staff to advance their educational qualifications at OUT. For example on development of ODEX questions, uploading course materials on OUT learning management Systems and so on members of academic staff are given opportunity to advance further (Interview with a lecturer at Kinondoni centre on 13th May 2016).*

However, it was established that even though OUT grants professional development opportunities, there was a challenge in most cases to attain scholarships. Members of the academic staff struggled on their own to advance professionally as one lecturer noted *"...all staffs are getting professional development but it is their own efforts to get scholarships... In my view I think there is no solid succession plan in the place"* (Interview with a lecturer at Kinondoni centre on 13th May 2016).

The centre results on the educational levels of the members of academic staff were not far from the general picture of OUT academic staff. Three kinds of levels featured members of academic staff at OUT generally. These were PhD, masters and first degree holders. PhD and master's degree holders served as lecturers and holders of first degree served as tutorial assistants. Table 4.3 shows educational

qualifications of members of academic staff at OUT as a whole in 2009/10 through 2013/14 academic years.

Table 4.3: OUT academic Staff Qualifications

Year	PhD			Masters			First degree			Total		
	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T
2009/10	46	9	55	89	48	137	48	26	74	183	83	266
2010/11	56	13	69	84	59	143	64	32	96	204	104	308
2011/12	59	17	76	105	75	180	52	27	79	216	119	335
2012/13	66	19	85	110	82	192	51	26	77	227	127	354
2013/14	76	25	101	108	83	191	60	22	82	244	130	374

Source: OUT (2014)

The above findings suggest that that OUT was always able to employ academically strong and experienced members of academic staff. OUT was able to improve the quality of its staff professionally by giving them opportunities to grow. The practice appeals to the notion that good teachers produce good students. This is so obvious because the teacher's most important task is contributing to and enhancing the learning and achievement of the learners.

4.5.2 Academic Staff by Gender

Gender was another aspect that was used to determine the quality of academic staff at OUT. The balance between male and female staffs at OUT was a sign that OUT was real promoting gender balance. Data was accessed through documentary review and interviews with lecturers and Centre director. This study thus, established that gender parity still existed among members of academic staff at OUT, even though OUT has made commendable efforts to increase the number of female members of

academic staff in certain level of qualifications. Data from institutional documents prove that the centre in attempt to improve gender issue between 2011/12 and 2014/15 academic years, employment of members of academic staff especially for masters and first degree stressed much to increase the number of female members of academic staff. This was in quest to put down male gender dominance. Centre statistics indicated that in 2011/12 academic year 11 members of academic staff (5 holders of masters and 6 holders of first degree) were employed.The same picture was evident in the 2013/14 academic year in which female members of academic staff who held masters and first degrees exceeded the number of male counterparts by far. The study revealed further that at PhD level male academic staff exceeded the number of females. The centre in 2011/12, 2013/14 and 2014/15 academic years had 2, 3 and 3 PhD holders respectively. The centre had none female members of academic staff holding PhD with exception of one (1) member in 2013/14 academic year only. Table 4.4 below summarizes data on academic staff by gender at Kinondoni OUT centre.

Table 4.4: Academic staff by Gender at Kinondoni centre

Year	PhD			Masters			First degree			Total		
	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T
2011/12	2	-	2	2	5	7	-	6	6	4	11	15
2013/14	3	1	4	2	5	7	-	5	5	5	11	16
2014/15	3	-	3	2	5	7	-	1	1	5	6	11

Source: Director Kinondoni Centre (2016)

Data from the interviews with Centre Director and lecturers were from the data from institutional documents regarding members of academic staff by gender. It was

revealed that the center managed to promote gender balance by employing a good number of female members of academic staff with masters and first degree qualifications. However, the challenge remained in the PhD level where male gender still dominated members of academic staff. A center director in the interview session was much concerned with this as he commented:

> *...OUT has always recruited members of the academic staff through the consideration of gender balance...in faculties where majorities who have applied for a certain vacancy are male and few are female priority has been given to female seekers but without compromising quality (Interview with a centre director at Kinondoni centre on 13th May 2016)*

The same view was echoed by lecturers in interview sessions. This is what one lecturer argued:

> *...OUT is conscious about gender balance... it offers chances to both male and female to work at OUT in difference faculties and when creating teams for specific assignments; also when searching for HODs and faculty deans...indeed OUT is an equal employer even though male staffs exceed female for PhD. For masters and tutorial assistants our centre has managed to redress completely the gender gap. Female members of academic staff have are many compared to the number of male counterparts....these efforts show that OUT is concerned with enhancing gender balance (Interview with a lecturer at Kinondoni centre on 13th May 2016)*

The data above suggests that Kinondoni centre in recent years had been too sensitive to promotion of gender balance by giving optimum opportunity to female member of academic staff to work at OUT. However, the results indicate a danger of female gender dominance in the near future if sensitive measures are not taken to balance between the two genders. Policies for gender promotion were not meant to exchange gender dominance from male to female rather to equalize between the two. However, against the male gender dominance these are commendable efforts.

The above data when compared with OUT national data of members of academic staff, it appears that efforts at the centre level have been very effective in redressing gender parity. The national picture on members of academic staff by gender revealed that gender parity still existed at OUT despite efforts to redress. Data from the documents indicated the continual dominance of male gender at the expense of female gender for members of academic staff. In all years from 2009/10 to 2013/14 the number of male members of academic staff exceeded the number of female members. However, there were a noticeable increase of the number of female members of academic staff in the history of OUT. The table below summarizes the national data on members of academic staff by gender at OUT between 2009/10 and 2013/14 academic years.

Table 4.5: OUT academic Staff by Gender (National Picture)

Year	PhD			Masters			First degree			Total		
	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T
2009/10	46	9	55	89	48	137	48	26	74	183	83	266
2010/11	56	13	69	84	59	143	64	32	96	204	104	308
2011/12	59	17	76	105	75	180	52	27	79	216	119	335
2012/13	66	19	85	110	82	192	51	26	77	227	127	354
2013/14	76	25	101	108	83	191	60	22	82	244	130	374

Source: OUT (2014)

The above national data suggests and proves that even though OUT has done all what it could to improve gender balance especially through increasing the number of female members of academic staff, the increase has not managed to down gender parity. Staff recruitment for female staff is not yet optimum and it remained low. OUT management need to increase efforts to attracting more female academic staff to be recruited if at all gender balance is to be promoted to nearly equal that of male gender.

4.5.3 The Disposition Towards Learners

The disposition towards learners was also used to determine the quality of academic staff at OUT. Collegiality was studied for this purpose. In this study, collegiality had to do with the way members of the academic staff both males and females worked in teams for common goal that is, helping learners to learn. The assumption was that cooperative and supportive staff utilized good ideas from both male and female staffs through creating teams of work and this had an impact to learners' achievement.

In this study it was disclosed that collegiality featured among members of academic staff. Both male and female staffs worked together helping learners in teams. This enabled learner to acquire skills and knowledge to face the challenges of development that require immediate and long resolutions. One lecturer had the following to comment:

> *"...strong mutual cooperation was evident at departmental level to the faculty level with involvement of female and male academic staffs to hold different positions as heads of department, faculty deans and regional directors" (interview with a lecturer at Kinondoni centre on 13th May 2016).*

The findings above imply that members of the academic staff's deposition toward learners were positive. Academic staff worked in teams involving both male and female staffs to help learners in their studies.

4.6   Gender specific challenges that learners face at OUT

The third research objective aimed at identifying gender specific challenges that learners face at OUT. The argument was that to be able to identify the roles for

promoting gender balance, establishing gender specific challenges were very essential. To capture needed information separate interviews with lecturers and centre director were conducted. Also FGDs with learners at OUT were conducted to cross validate the information gathered through the interview. The findings are presented here below.

4.6.1 Insufficient Time to Revise Various Materials

Sufficient time for ODL learners is necessary to help them read and do assignments for the courses they study. Interviews with lecturers revealed that at OUT learners were had limited time to accomplish their assignments. It was further established that after class-hours learners had a pile of assignments and family roles to undertake within limited time as one lecturer strongly asserted that:

> *...the challenge that most learners face is that most run shortage of time to revise their materials...remember that the mode of study is independent through modules. This in fact, requires abundant time to revise. Due to family chores, it happens that some learners fail feel it challenging to fulfill their schooling obligations (Interview with a lecturer at Kinondoni centre on 12th May 2016)*

Another lecturer portrayed the same view arguing that:

> *...the issue of time is very challenging to ODL learners. The learners have a lot of responsibilities such that time to perform all these is insufficient. It is difficult to pursue higher studies, undertake employment responsibilities at the same time undertaking family activities...this is the reason that some serious learners work till midnight doing their study assignments (Interview with a lecturer at Kinondoni centre on 12th May 2016)*

The centre director portrayed further that time constraints had far reaching effects on learning. This is what he said:

> *...time constraints to ODL learners...as a result, some ended up;- missing assignment submission deadlines; failing to submit assignments, submitting sub-standard assignments, failing to attend tutorials and group discussions, obtaining low marks in their assignments, ill prepared for examinations, performing badly in their examinations, forming the greater percentage of student who repeat courses (Interview with a centre director at Kinondoni centre on 12th May 2016)*

The above findings in fact pose a great challenging to both male and female learners. In fact given the nature of the study mode at OUT, a learner requires a reasonable amount of time to accomplish all schooling, employer and family responsibilities.

4.6.2 Family Matters

This study established that apart from academic activities, learners at OUT attend also to other family activities. They were obliged to fulfill the female's traditional role of caring for the home and the family. In this respect, it became difficult to concentrate on one's studies ignoring the family. Difficulties were encountered in attending tutorials, consulting tutors and attending discussion groups. One lecturer pointed out that:

> *...family responsibilities take most of the learners time...female learners have to take care of their children, husbands and household activities...how could this learner follow smoothly their lessons? Indeed this is a burden (Interview with a lecturer at Kinondoni centre on 12th May 2016)).*

Another lecturer said:

> *Learners at OUT have multiple roles...apart from fulfilling the roles of a learner, they also fulfill other roles such as work and family responsibilities...female learners for example in addition to filling the role of student most of them also fill the role of a worker and spouse (interview with a lecturer at Kinondoni centre on 13th May 2016).*

The above findings imply that it is challenging to study through ODL mode. A learner need be discipline d to excel through this mode.

4.6.3 Social Functions

Social functions were also seen as the challenge to female learners. Together with schooling responsibilities learners were to attend to social functions like wedding and burial ceremonies. Indeed these took most of their time. A learner in FGD had the following to explain:

> ...a learner studying through ODL mode is a grown up person with many responsibilities. A learner has to fulfill social obligations. Social activities such as wedding and burial ceremonies are great challenge to an ODL learner. When he or she is given academic assignments they are not done on time...a learner has to attend to these activities as a member of the society. Some students have even reached a decision to postpone studies due to many activities they have to attend. Wedding activities need money, so some students even to pay tuition fees for their studies simply because they have paid for weeding and party functions (FGD with a learner at Kinondoni centre, 2016)

The findings above suggest that ODL learners have multiple functions. Apart from schooling commitments they also have to fulfill social responsibilities.

4.6.4 Technophobia

Successful learning through ODL mode is enhanced with learners' wider understanding of technology. Learners must be able to use computer and internet services in their studies. However, this study established that majority adult female ODL learners especially women were deficient of technology skills. They were not able to use computer in their studies. This was evidenced with delayed submission of

assignments. They were to seek help from other students who were able to operate computers. One lecturer said:

> *...the problem with our female students is that majority are incapable of using computers in their studies. They cannot use internet service to access online materials...elderly female learners are the one who are disadvantageous with this problem...some do not have computers and other who have are incapable of using them...when given assignments they simply use hand written works or they get assistance from those who are capable (interview with a lecturer at Kinondoni centre on 12th May 2016).*

Another lecturer revealed the same view:

> *...I sometimes feel that adult female learners show inadequate skills when it comes to use of computers or internet for studying...it should be understood that the technology required to participate in distance education can be a substantial barrier for female students...in my view females have higher technical barriers compared to males... (interview with a lecturer at Kinondoni centre on 10th May 2016).*

The above findings suggest that female learners have a great challenge to learn through ODL mode. It should be understood that ODL mode requires personal efforts to succeed. In most time they study independently. Within limited reference books, they need to possess requisite skills to operate computers to access online materials and type assignments for submission online.

4.7   Chapter Summary

This chapter presented and analyzed the findings of the study concerning the characteristics of learners at OUT, the quality of the academic staff and gender specific challenges faced by OUT learners. Concerning the characteristics of learners at OUT, it was found out that female learner at OUT had the following

characteristics: Married with family responsibilities, aged above 35, in-service learners, completion rate and high dropout rate. Similarly male learners exhibited the same features. They were married and had family responsibilities, aged above 35, hold full time jobs and have high completion rate. Furthermore, about strategies OUT used to promote gender balance, it was revealed that OUT has established its gender unit, has increased enrolment and has enhanced gender mainstreaming in its all its activities. Regarding the quality of academic staff, it was revealed that academic staff had various levels of education (PhD, masters and first degree), about gender the study established that at OUT gender parity existed at OUT with female staff outnumbering male staff for masters and first degree levels of education. With PhD male dominance featured. Regarding the disposition of academic staff towards learners, team work and corporation among academic staff was highly exercised. The chapter also established that learners who study at OUT faced several gender specific challenges. These were insufficient time to revise various material, family matters and social functions and technology phobia.

CHAPTER FIVE

5.0 DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS

5.1   Introduction

This chapter discusses the findings of the study in order to give meaning. The discussion is based on the major findings following the order of the study objectives. The researcher made a bold attempt to cross-validate the findings using other sources as done here below.

5.2   Characteristics of Female Learners at OUT

The first objective for this study sought to examine gender based characteristics of ODL learners at OUT. The characteristics were captured basing on female and male genders.

Female characteristics: The study established that female learners were married lived with a husband, children and other relatives. They were adult learners aging above 35. The study established also that female learners were government employees. These had a relatively low completion rate and high dropout rate. Regarding marital relationship the findings echo the findings of Thompson (1998) who argued that in addition to filling the role of student most distance learners especially females also fill the role of a spouse. Dabbagh (2005) similarly collected information about its students and established that majority of the learners about 66% were married.

About age characteristics, the findings concur with the findings by Thompson (1998)

who established that that distance education students are an average, older than typical undergraduate students. French and Vockell (1994) noted similarly that ODL learners are adults. Furthermore, the study also established that majority of female learners were government employees in different sectors and parastatals.

The findings above echo the findings from the study by Ndudzo and Nyatanga (2013) that ODL learner are an employed professional. Most of ODL students are employed in the Public sector and a few are employed in the private sector including NGO's. This implies that most of students studying in ODL mode come from public sector. Regarding completion rate the study established that the completion rate among female learners was low.

Male characteristics: The study established that male learners were married, aged above 35 and were government employees. It was also found that male learners had high completion rate. The findings regarding marital status confirm the findings by Dabbagh (2005) was collected information about its students and established that majority of the learners about 66% were married. About age characteristics, the findings concur with the findings by Thompson (1998) who established that distance education students are an average, older than typical undergraduate students. Ference & Vockell (1994) noted similarly that ODL learners are adults.

Regarding completion rate, the findings echo the finding from the study by Ndudzo and Nyatanga (2013) which established that male learners graduated in good numbers compared to female counterparts.

5.3   Strategies Used by OUT to Promote Gender Balance

This section mainly focused on strategies OUT use to promote gender balance. The study results involved the following:

Establishment of gender unit of OUT. It was strongly affirmed that OUT was determined to ensure gender balance. OUT had launched gender unit whose aim was ensuring that OUT observes and maintains equal opportunity for all. The findings confirm what SADC (2008) recommended if at all gender balance is to be promoted. SADC (2008) asserts that Gender Focal Points need be established in ODL institutions. These however, need be trained, with core gender responsibility functions that are part of their performance appraisal.

Enhance enrolment equality to 50:50. The findings revealed that OUT has also been committed to reach gender balance through raising the number of both male and female students to 50:50 ratio. Implied in these findings is that the past gender gap has been narrowed with increase of female enrollment in OUT related academic programmes. The findings echo those of Swamy (2011) which depict that enrolment has been increasing steadily in ODL with annual growth rate of about 20% in the last two years. More specifically the enrolment of women and girls 32% from socially weaker disabled and geographically weaker sections have improved.

Gender mainstreaming in all OUT. Study findings indicated that OUT has ensured gender mainstreaming in all its activities in bold attempt to promote gender balance. In almost all OUT activities the concept of gender has been incorporated to sensitize

OUT community with gender issues. The findings are similar to those of OUT (2017) that OUT has mainstreamed its gender programmes, plans and activities.

5.4   The Quality of Academic staff at OUT

This section mainly discusses the findings from the second research question which explored the quality of academic staff in different faculties at OUT. Three aspects were used to capture academic staff quality at OUT: education level, gender and disposition toward learners.

Education level: The study established that Kinondoni OUT centre had members of the academic staff who possessed different levels of education (PhD, masters and first degree). It was also found out that holders of masters' degree and tutorial assistants were relatively many in number compared to PhD holders. These findings are congruent with OUT (2014) report on academic staff which recorded that there was more academic staff with Master's qualification than those holding PhD or First degrees.   This picture at Kinondoni centre is a miniature of the overall picture of the number of academic staff in all learning institutions where majority of the members of academic staff are holders of masters than PhD and first degree holders (MOEVT, 2014).

Gender: It was found out that gender parity still existed among members of academic staff at OUT, even though OUT has made commendable efforts to increase the number of female members of academic staff in certain level of qualifications. The number of female academic staff exceeded the number of males for masters and

first degree levels. This marks a new turn on gender dominance from male to female giving a new kind of gender parity. However, these findings are in line with OUT (2014) report which explained prevalent of gender disparity among academic staff. Nonetheless, the above findings contradicted the general OUT (2014) report on academic staff by gender on which gender dominated among teaching staff. While this study established female gender dominance, the OUT (2014) report recorded male gender dominance but with relative increase of female academic staff.

5.5 Gender specific Challenges that Learners Face at OUT

This section discusses the findings from the third research objective. This objective aimed at identifying gender specific challenges that learners faced at OUT. The following were established in this study: (1) insufficient time to revise various materials, (2) family matters, (3) social functions, and (4) technophobia. These challenges are discussed here under.

Insufficient time to revise various materials: It was established that at OUT learners had limited time to revise the given materials and accomplish their assignments. It was further established that after class-hours learners had a pile of assignments and family roles to undertake within limited time. The findings above concur with the findings of the study conducted by Musingafi, Mapuranga, Chiwanza and Zabron (2015) which established that ODL learners were challenged with a range of obstacles in their course of studies including lack of sufficient time for study. A study by Dodo (2013) established similarly that time was a challenge for learners who were studying through ODL mode.

Family matters: This study established that apart from academic activities, learners at OUT attended also to family activities. They were obliged to fulfill the wife's traditional role of caring for the home and the family. The findings reflected the findings by Opong, Dhatrogah, and Prosper (2008) and Gudhlanga, Magadza and Mafa (2012) who revealed that woman multiple roles were a big challenge to women in ODL classes. This challenge was linked to the wife's traditional role of caring for the home and the family. The study pointed out that it becomes difficult to concentrate on one's studies ignoring the family. Difficulties were encountered in attending tutorials, consulting tutors and attending discussion groups. The study by Kramarae (2001) proved the same view revealing that the biggest barriers women face to learning in a distance education setting deal with the other commitments in their already busy lives. The findings disclosed that while distance learning provides convenient opportunities for women to learn, it also creates a third shift. When women are done for the day juggling the demands of being a spouse, a mother, and an employee, they squeeze in another layer of distance education responsibilities during the "third shift" either very early in the morning or late at night. At the same time that distance education decreases the barriers related to distance and time, it also puts an added burden on women.

Social functions: The study established that together with schooling responsibilities learners were to attend to social functions like wedding and burial ceremonies. Indeed these took most of their time and hence little time was spent on schooling activities. The study confirmed the findings by Hanson et al. (1997) arguing on the profile of distance learners, established similarly that ODL constitutes distance

learners with occupational and social commitments. Thompson (1998) similarly argued that in addition to filling the role of student most distance learners also fill the role of a worker and spouse and social functions.

Technophobia: This study established that majority ODL learners especially women were deficient of technology skills. They were not able to use computer in their studies. The above findings confirm the findings by Gudhlanga, Magadza & Mafa (2012) which reported that the challenge seemed to be that most elderly female students lacked skills to manipulate computers in search of information. This was exacerbated by the participants' phobia for ICT. This argument is premised on the observation that despite the presence of ICT technicians staffing the ICT laboratories at regional centres, elderly women students hardly asked for assistance on how to use computers to access information, even for performing basic operations such as typing of assignments. Similarly, a more recent study conducted by Musingafi, Mapuranga, Chiwanza and Zabron (2015) founded out that ODL female learners relative to males were challenged with difficulties in access and use of ICT.

CHAPTER SIX

6.0 SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

6.1   Introduction

This chapter presents the summary of the major findings of the study, conclusions and recommendations. Mainly, it comprises four sections. The first section summarizes the study and the second section gives a synoptic view of the major findings. The third section concludes the study and the last section provides the recommendations for actions and areas that need further research.

6.2   Summary of the study

The purpose of this study was to investigate the roles of Open and Distance Learning in promoting gender balance at the Open University of Tanzania.

Specifically the study sought to: -

  i.   To examine the characteristics of ODL leaners in terms of gender at OUT.

 ii.   To determine the strategies used by OUT to promote gender balance.

iii.   To assess the quality of teachers in different faculties at OUT.

iv.   To determine gender specific challenges that learners face at OUT.

The study was mainly qualitative. The sample size for the study was 51. Data were collected using an open questionnaire, interview, FGDs and documentary review. Data collected were subjected to content analysis.

6.3   Major Findings of the Study

It was found out that female learner at OUT had the following characteristics: Married with family responsibilities, aged above 35, in-service learners, completion rate and high dropout rate. Similarly male learners exhibited the same features. They were married and had family responsibilities, aged above 35, hold full time jobs and have high completion rate.

The study has also established that OUT use its established gender unit, 50:50 enrolment policy and has mainstreamed its gender programmes, plans and activities towards promoting gender balance.

Regarding the quality of academic staff, it was revealed that academic staff had various levels of education (PhD, masters and first degree), about gender the study established that at OUT gender parity existed at OUT with female staff outnumbering male staff for masters and first degree levels of education. With PhD male dominance featured. Regarding the disposition of academic staff towards learners, team work and corporation among academic staff was highly exercised.

It was found out those learners who study at OUT faced several gender specific challenges. These were family matters and social functions, family roles and technology phobia.

6.4   Conclusion

In view of the research objectives that guided this study, the following conclusion were made according to the objectives

6.4.1 Finding of the Study

The following are the major findings of the study.

i)   Both female and male learners have similar demographic characteristics in terms of their marital status and responsibilities, age and in-service status.

ii) Male leaners exhibited high completion rate and they study for status quo and for the purpose of increase their pension.

iii) OUT established gender unit, 50:50 enrolment policy and has mainstreamed its gender programmes, plans and activities towards promoting gender balance.

iv) There is still gender imbalance in the highest qualification (PhD level) among lectures at OUT.

v)   Employment of female lectures is one of the strategies used by OUT to reduce gender imbalance. However, challenge remained in the PhD level where male gender still dominated members of academic staff. Furthermore team work and coperation at OUT was highly exercised to help smooth learning of the learners.

vi) Several challenges face OUT learners including family matters About gender specific challenges, the study concluded that out that OUT learners faced several challenges. These were Family matters and social functions, family roles and technology phobia.

6.5   Recommendations

Based on the conclusion of this study, the following recommendations were made**.**

i) Appropriate learning strategies should be devised that will benefit the learners basing on their characteristics.

ii) There is a need of devising mechanism to ensure that gender is promoted at out. This should be reflected in ensuring balance between male and female learners in various programmes. Also OUT employment policy need be gender sensitive to ensuring that members of academic staff are employed with much consideration of gender to avoid male or female gender dominance.

iii) A related study should be conducted to establish effective strategies that will help mitigate the challenges learners face at OUT and a comparative study with other regional centres to check whether the strategies adopted for promotion of gender balance in ODL are similar or different.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: RESEARCH CLEARANCE LETTER

THE OPEN UNIVERSITY OF TANZANIA
DIRECTORATE OF RESEARCH, PUBLICATIONS, *AND POSTGRADUATE STUDIES*

P.O. Box 23409
Dar es Salaam,
Tanzania,
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30/4/2016

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN
RE: RESEARCH CLEARANCE
The Open University of Tanzania was established by an act of Parliament no. 17 of 1992. The act became operational on the 1st March 1993 by public notes No. 55 in the official Gazette. Act number 7 of 1992 has now been replaced by the Open University of Tanzania charter which is in line the university act of 2005. The charter became operational on 1st January 2007. One of the mission objectives of the university is to generate and apply knowledge through research. For this reason staff and students undertake research activities from time to time.

To facilitate the research function, the vice chancellor of the Open University of Tanzania was empowered to issue a research clearance to both staff and students of the university on behalf of the government of Tanzania and the Tanzania Commission of Science and Technology.

The purpose of this letter is to introduce to you **Ms. Helena Peter, PG 201404185** who is a MED ODL student at the Open University of Tanzania. By this letter, **Ms. Peter has** been granted clearance to conduct research in the country. The title of his research is **"Roles of Open and Distance Learning (ODL) in Promoting Gender Balance: A Case of Open University of Tanzania".** The research will beconducted in Ilala and Kinondoni Regional Centres. The period which this permission has been granted is from 2/05/2016 to 1/06/2016.

In case you need any further information, please contact:
The Deputy Vice Chancellor (Academic); The Open University of Tanzania; P.O. Box 23409; Dar Es Salaam. Tel: 022-2-2668820

We thank you in advance for your cooperation and facilitation of this research activity.
Yours sincerely,

Prof Hossea Rwegoshora
For: VICE CHANCELLOR
THE OPEN UNIVERSITY OF TANZANIA

APPENDIX B: DATA COLLECTION TOOLS

Open-ended questionnaire

Dear respondent, I am a student at the Open University of Tanzania. Currently I am engaged in a research activity on roles of Open and Distance Learning (ODL) in promoting gender balance: A case of Open University of Tanzania that will lead to an award of a Master of Education in Open and Distance learning (MED-ODL). This Questionnaire therefore is meant for gathering relevant information for the research study in question in order to meet the stated purpose. Be confident that information that you give will be treated and limited to this purpose only and will remain confidential. You should not write your name in this questionnaire. The researcher appeals to your co-operation and willingness to provide correct and valid information.

1. Gender (please circle the most applicable)

   Male.................. Female..............

2. Education level (please tick the most applicable)

Level	Tick
Primary education	
Secondary education	
Diploma	
Degree	
Masters	
PhD	

3. Age (Please tick the most applicable)

Age group	Tick
11-18	
18-20	
21-30	
31-45	
46-60	
61+	

4. Marital status (Please tick the most applicable)

Married............ Single...............

5. With your experience teaching at OUT, what you think are gender specific characteristics of learners at OUT?

   a) Specific characteristics of female learners at OUT

      i)…………………………………………….

      ii)……………………………………………

      iii)……………………………………………..

      iv)……………………………………………..

      v)……………………………………………

   b) Specific characteristics of male learners at OUT

      i)…………………………………………….

      ii)……………………………………………

      iii)……………………………………………..

      iv)……………………………………………..

      v)……………………………………………

6. What you think are strategies employed by OUT that promote gender balance?

7. What is your opinion about the academic staff at OUT regarding the following:

   a) Professional development…………………………………………………

      …………………………………………………………………………

      …………….…………………………………………………………

      …………………………………………………………………………

b) Gender…………………………………………………………………………

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c) Collegiality…………………………………………………………………

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8. What do you think are gender specific challenges that learners face at OUT?

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Thank you for your cooperation

Focus Group Discussion with Learners at OUT

Introduction

Dear respondent, I am a student at the Open University of Tanzania (OUT). Currently I am engaged in a research activity on roles of Open and Distance Learning (ODL) in promoting gender balance: A case of Open University of Tanzania that will lead to an award of a Master of Education in Open and Distance learning (MED-ODL). Your active participation in the discussion counts most for the success of this study. Be free and confident to give your ideas. Your welcome!

QUESTIONS

1. What is the nature of learners studying at OUT gender wise?

2. What are strategies employed by OUT to promote gender balance?

3. What is your view regarding the quality of academic staff at OUT? Please explain.

4. What you think are gender specific challenges that learners face at OUT?

Thank you for your participation

Documentary Review Guide

a. Document Particulars

    i.   Name of the document……………………………………………………

    ii.   Publisher……………………………………………………………………

    iii.   Year of publication…………………………………………………………

b. Review matrix

SNO	Information sought	Quotations
1	Gender specific characteristics of ODL learners	
2	Strategies employed by OUT to promote gender balance	

3	Academic staff quality at OUT
	    i) Educational qualification
	    ii) Teaching experience
	    iii) Professional development
	    iv) Gender
	    v) Collegiality
	    vi) Adherence to professional code of conduct	

4	Gender specific challenges that learners face at OUT	