The Challenges of Affirmative Action in Tanzanian Higher Education Institutions: A Case Study of the University of Dar es Salaam, Tanzania

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Abstract
This article discusses affirmative action programmes introduced and designed to increase female students' enrolment at the University of Dar es Salaam. The assessment of the interventions is made within the context and perceptions of their implementation. A key finding of this study is that affirmative action programmes have succeeded in increasing female enrolment generally and in traditionally male-dominated specializations such as Engineering, Medicine, Chemistry, Physics and Mathematics specifically. For example, as a result of affirmative action female enrolment in the Faculty of Science rose from 16% in 1996 to 27% in 2003/2004 and from 7% in 1996 to 13% in 2003/04 in the Engineering Faculty. However, as this article shows, there is much more to gender equity than just numbers. Qualitative factors such as participation in academic life as students or staff within and outside the classroom, the living environment, pedagogy and institutional micro-politics continue to pose challenges for gender equity and equality. Limitations in programme scale, infrastructure and resources also raise important questions regarding the sustainability of these affirmative action programmes. Therefore, while affirmative action can be seen as positive efforts to offset a historical imbalance, it still is confronted with and opens up new debates on privilege and discrimination amidst concerns with sustainability in a third world context.