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‘Does Gender Inequality Still Exist within Education in Tanzania and to what Extent?’

“Everyone has the right to education” (United Nations, 1948: 7).

Abstract

In Tanzania, gender inequality within education is a common issue, with many girls becoming excluded, uneducated and dependent due to strict gender roles (UNICEF, 2005). Girls are often forced into gender roles such as housekeeping and caring for siblings and typically hold a lower social status than boys (UNICEF, 2005). If the opportunity for an education arises, it is usually only for a short period of time as girls are frequently forced to drop out of school when they reach puberty (UNICEF, 2005). Therefore, the purpose of this research was to determine whether gender inequality still exists and to what extent within Tanzanian schools as previous research displays continuous gender inequalities within education, suggesting a need for qualitative research in this area. The research focused mainly on Schools for Life set up by COCO, however, government schools were included in the research to gain a broader understanding of gender inequality in education. The rationale behind this research was to discover whether and why gender inequality is so prevalent within Tanzanian schools through mixed research methods, mostly qualitative methods, and to discover a way to alter these views and promote a more gender equal environment.

COCO is an organisation which provides the opportunity of education in Tanzania, Kenya and Uganda through their Schools for Life which launched in 2014. They believe that every child should have the opportunity to receive education regardless of gender, race or financial status (COCO, 2016). COCO aims to tackle gendered ideologies to create a more equal society and break the cycle of poverty through education. Additionally, they aim to achieve this by working with the wider community, listening to individual needs, offering a good quality education, teaching life skills such as growing food and ensuring that projects are specific to the needs of the communities. Their vision is “a world where every child, everywhere has access to quality education” (COCO, 2016: 1).

Literature review

As gender equality and education in Africa is a widely researched topic, there were numerous reports and journals to be explored to discover what different types of research reveal about gender equality in education. This also allowed any gaps within the literature to be identified which may need further research.

Ideologies of gender are largely based around a social constructionist approach which encourages and promotes the idea of binary opposites within males and females. Usually these ideologies derive from social factors such as family, friends and culture, and instil gendered roles into children from a young age (Ryle, 2015). Conversely, this approach has been contradicted by the essentialist approach of gender which claims that for something to be a sex specific quality it must be “timeless and unchangeable” (Ryle, 2015: 12) regardless of location and social surroundings. What it means to be a man or woman is learned through the socialisation process, it is not innate, and therefore, it has been argued that gender is socially constructed (Giddens and Sutton, 2013).

Simmonds (2014) conducted a study on gender inequality within the school curriculum in Africa, using qualitative document research. Within this study, Simmonds (2014) found that although gender equality is being promoted through the 2000-2015 Millennium Development Goal, within the curriculum, there are still many negative perceptions of gender (Simmonds, 2014). The research stated that there is still an underlying issue as people assume “gender equality and the empowerment of women are unattainable or that they are unimportant” (Simmonds, 2014: 636) suggesting a patriarchal dominance within African culture. Similarly, Walby (1990) claims that throughout education, gender roles are encouraged through not only the formal curriculum but the hidden curriculum (Walby 1990). This is where children commonly pick things up informally and subconsciously regarding gender roles, encouraging feminine and masculine behaviours (Walby, 1990).

Statistics presented by Osadan and Burrage (2014) display that gender inequality within education is still very common, especially within developing countries (Osadan and Burrage, 2014). This was made evident within the enrolment statistics which presented that, “in Africa alone, 72% of school age female children have never been enrolled into school, compared with 55% of male children” (Osadan and Burrage, 2014: 217). Additionally, statistics specific to Tanzania display that 96% of males and 97% of females are enrolled into primary education, however, only 31% of males and 24% of females are enrolled into secondary education leaving a large 73% of females uneducated at secondary level (UNESCO, 2012).

Males are the preferred sex to be educated, however, lack of education among females enforces the “traditionally-held gender role of staying at home, doing household chores, taking care of children, and performing other unpaid work” (Osadan and Burrage, 2014: 218). Although often women are denied the right to be educated, Tembon and Fort (2008) stated that; “women’s economic empowerment is essential for economic development, growth, and poverty reduction not only because of the income it generates, but also because it helps to break the vicious cycle of poverty” (Tembon and Fort, 2014: xvii). Therefore, through education and the teaching of gender equality, developing countries will face positive economic and social benefits (Tembon and Fort, 2014).

Poverty is one of the main preventions of girl’s education in developing countries and is therefore partly responsible for gender inequalities. Salah (2005) explains that “destitute parents are often more concerned about how much their daughter is worth than the value of her education” (Salah, 2005: 69). For many parents a daughter holds value and is therefore used as a quick solution to a family’s poverty, through the selling of a woman, from one man to another (Salah, 2005). This highlights the overriding patriarchal control in which allows men to control women “like currency, in some ways no different from the exchange of an animal or clay pot” dehumanising a woman into an object for the purpose of an individual’s desires (Ryle, 2015). As Coontz (2005) put it, “marriage is the cornerstone of patriarchal power” (Coontz, 2005: 42).

Salah (2005) explored the way in which culture affects girls being educated and claimed that many families assume that education is a western phenomenon, therefore, they assume that it is destructive to cultural values (Salah, 2005). However, education is something which has existed among many cultures long before western countries and is important for parents to understand this; “education reinforces values and traditions” (Salah, 2005: 69). Salah also claimed that the passing on of tradition and cultural roles is an important role of the woman, however without an education it becomes more difficult to translate and teach these traditions (Salah, 2005). She concludes that education in fact is important to cultures and women in order to fight poverty, adaption to the wider society as well as strengthening the positive aspects of their culture (Salah, 2005).

Methodology

Ontology is concerned with “understanding the world” (Scott, 2014: 531) and exploring a difference within views and opinions, therefore, the ontological perspective of this research will be to investigate and gather information from individual respondents on gender equality and education within Tanzania. The epistemological approach of this research will be interpretivism as this perspective “respects the differences between people and the objects of natural sciences and therefore requires the social scientist to grasp the subjective meaning of social action” (Bryman, 2012: 30). This approach is beneficial to this specific research as it helps the researcher “understand multiple social constructions of meaning and knowledge” (Robson, 2002: 27) as well as being able to interpret multiple realities in order to gain a personal insight into gender inequality within education in Tanzania.

Data Collection and Participants

All the data was collected by a research team in Tanzania who conducted semi-structured interviews. This allowed children and young adults between the ages of thirteen and twenty-one, both male and female, to give an insight into their thoughts on education and gender equality. The primary research collected by the research team was then used for this report; however, this research report had no involvement in the data collection process and was given the data directly by COCO to analyse. The sample was picked at random in both Schools for Life and private government schools as “studying a random sample provides the best opportunity to generalize the results to the population” (Marshall, 1996: 523).

All together around nineteen females and nineteen males were involved in answering the questions provided by COCO to ensure there was a good balance of both male and female answers. The aim of the research was to discover whether both males and females, if given the same opportunity, both have an equal experience in education as well as understanding whether education makes a difference to traditional gendered views.

Although there were many advantages of using primary data collected by other researchers, it is important that the limitations of this method are also explored at this point. As the research was conducted by COCO’s overseas team, there was no control over the wording of the interview questions; therefore, these may not have provided the exact information necessary for this research (Vartanian, 2011). Similarly, lack of control over participants involved in the interview posed a potential issue as they may not be suitable for the

standard of the research, thus, supplying unnecessary information making that data more difficult to code (Vartanian, 2011). Furthermore, lack of control over the data collection process and interviews may be problematic as participant's answers may have been prompted. This may have resulted in participants providing false information that they think the interviewer would like to hear, resulting in the validity of answers being questioned (Opdenakker, 2006).

Data Analysis

The data was organised on a software programme called NVivo which allowed the primary data to be coded and placed into nodes to determine whether any similarities and differences emerged within the data. Thematic analysis was used to analyse the data by "coding text according to apriori and empirical themes" (Gibson and Brown, 2009: 158) as this method allows themes within the data to emerge. Using NVivo for the data analysis allowed the data to be easily accessed, safely stored and organised for the findings. Although the data was both qualitative and quantitative, it was not necessary to use a software programme for the qualitative data as only the first two questions were quantitative and could be simply analysed without software (**see appendix 1**).

Ethics

Although seeking informed consent within qualitative research is crucial, this was not necessary to include within this research report as the data was collected and provided by a research team, therefore, this particular research report played no part in the data collection stage. On the other hand, ethical procedures were taken into consideration when considering the storage of the data. All the data was stored in a safe and secure place and shared only with other members of COCO in order to "treat respondents, their identity, their privacy and their story with care" (Miller et al, 2012: 163). Furthermore, as a researcher it is important to minimise the risks within qualitative research in any way possible; therefore, all names of participants were changed to numbers to hide the identity of any participant who took part within the data collection process (Miller et al, 2012). For this particular research report the University of Sunderland Code of Ethics was followed to ensure that the research was conducted and written up "in accordance with the University's Research Ethics Principals, Professional Codes of Practice and the law" (University of

Sunderland, no date). This was to ensure that all research conducted followed professional ethical guidelines.

Findings/Discussion

Through using thematic analysis, three dominant themes emerged within the data, these being, gendered roles, patriarchy and poverty. Throughout the data, there are clear aspects of socially constructed ideologies of gender, with many girls and boys being expected to fulfil their gender roles and this being encouraged within the education system. An example of this occurs when asked whether girls and boys are treated the same at school. Many of the responses suggested that boys were naturally more intelligent and stronger than girls and girls were more weak, vulnerable, emotional and better at cleaning and chores. Additionally, all the participants outlined typical masculine and feminine roles claiming that boys were better at: heavy work, lumbering, mechanics, construction, doing hard work, playing football, being a lawyer, fishing, climbing mountains, electrician, doctor, pilot, and performing well in exams. On the other hand, girls were said to be better at: conceiving, cooking, moping, washing, breast feeding, babysitting, taking care of the family, being a housewife, fetching water, and hair dressing. This supports the work of Osadan and Burrage (2014) who claim that the traditionally held gender role of the housewife is commonly enforced within a woman's life, however, it is stated that this is due to lack of education (Osadan and Burrage, 2014). Therefore, it can be argued that although children are being educated, gendered roles are still largely imposed through education and culture.

Furthermore, respondents highlighted the differences within school tasks claiming that "boys are not given the work of cleaning the classes" (Participant 23, female, age 18) and "girls are not given hard work like carrying blocks" (Participant 18, male, age 18) suggesting that gender roles are encouraged throughout the education system within the tasks they are expected to do. This evidences the idea of the hidden curriculum discussed in the work of Walby (1990) as social constructions of gender are being enforced throughout school related tasks rather than the school curriculum (Walby, 1990).

Many of the students, both male and female, stated that "boys are cleverer than girls" (Participant 1, male, age 14) and "boys will not allow girls to perform better than them or be equal" (Participant 18, male, age 18). This suggests that patriarchy is still very dominant

within the Tanzanian culture and supports the work of Simmonds (2014) who claims that women are often seen as unimportant, therefore, less likely to succeed than boys (Simmonds, 2014). Furthermore, this ideology of masculinity highlights a socially constructed ideology of how these children are performing within their gender as well as displaying the inequalities within education. Socially constructed ideas of males being more intelligent provide males with a natural advantage of succeeding within education, and therefore, discourage females to involve themselves within education.

One of the reasons stated as to why less likely to be educated is that, “some of the parents think of receiving bride price for their children to get married” (Participant 17, male, age 16). Salah (2005) states that, the price of a daughter is seen as a quick fix to poverty and often valued more than a woman’s education (Salah, 2005). For this reason, many women are less likely to be encouraged to gain an education and more likely to be encouraged to become a housewife and fulfil their assigned gender role. Ryle (2015) states that women are often dehumanised and treated like objects which is common within the agreement of marriage, in this case traded as an item in return of money (Ryle 2015). This again highlights the work of Simmonds (2014) as the selling of women highlights the unimportant status of a woman, attaching little value to females (Simmonds, 2014). Throughout this procedure, patriarchal control is underlined, with many men selling their daughters to another man, with very little or no input from the woman being sold, undermining the status and significance of a woman (Coontz, 2005).

Despite the data providing evidence of gender inequality occurring within the education system, the research does display that compared to five years ago, many more parents are encouraging their girls to go to school. Participant 38 claimed that, “the community has started to understand the importance of education” (participant 38, male, age 14) and “parents now know the importance of taking girls to school” (participant 22, female, age 18). This suggests that attitudes on education are becoming more positive through the introduction of free education making it easier for children to be educated. Moreover the findings of this report support the work of Tembon and Fort (2014) who state that educating women is good for the economy and can provide a long term solution to poverty (Tembon and Fort, 2014).

A fourth theme emerged through the use of thematic analysis, this being changing gender roles. There was very little existing literature to support this theme, however, the work of COCO highlights positive impacts within their report. They state that through their Schools for Life and increased support of parents, many more children will be enrolled into school to gain an education as a result of this (COCO, 2016). Furthermore, all participants involved within this research stated that education has had a positive impact on their lives with many stating that “education has removed my ignorance” (Participant 34, female, age 16) allowing a slow change of attitude towards gender equality within education. Overall, the data displays that education; particularly COCO Schools for Life are having a positive impact on school children, teachers and the wider community.

What differences emerged within the data between schools for life and government schools?

The data presented huge differences between COCO’s schools for life and government schools when participants were asked whether there has been any change made to their school to make it easier for everyone to attend. All thirty-one participants from COCO schools for life agreed that there had been positive changes which have helped more people attend school such as “new classes, new teachers, water, solar power, water harvesting system and playing grounds” (Participant 15, female, age 13). Additionally, one student stated, “we are living in a boarding school and it helps us study well” (Participant 18, male, age 18) suggesting that having this facility on site allows more people to attend school without the trouble of travel. Overall the data collected displays that COCO schools for life offer many more facilities to help make studying and attending school easier to encourage higher education rates among boys and girls. On the other hand, data collected from the government school provided opposite data stating that “no changes have been made and the environment is not conducive for studying” (Participant 32, female, age 21) and all students agreed that there are not enough facilities such as “books and classes” (Participant 34, female, age 16). This indicates that governments schools are not providing the correct facilities to help students learn or encourage more people into education.

Another area which displayed very contrasting data between COCO’s schools for life and government schools were the treatment of pupils. Where participants reported that there

had been no unfair treatment from teachers to students in COCO's schools for life, participants 32 and 38 from government schools claimed that they had witnessed a "male teacher mistreated a girl because she did not want to engage in a love affair" (Participant 38, male, age 14). Both participants claimed to have witnessed the same problem of male teachers treating females unfairly suggesting a risk to young girls and women within these schools. This proposes that COCO provide a safer environment for both boys and girls to learn in, whereas, government schools appear to present more risk, especially towards girls.

Conclusion

This research was conducted to explore whether gender inequality existed within schools in Tanzania and to what extent. The findings displayed that gender inequality is still very prevalent within education in Tanzania and is encouraged within every day routine and throughout education. All participants involved in this research highlighted extremely gendered roles especially when discussing the roles of girls and boys in schools, suggesting that gender inequality is still highly existent within education and within a hidden curriculum. Additionally, the research proposes that both males and females are very subconsciously aware of their very contrasting gender roles and fulfil these roles through every day gendered tasks, to meet the expectations of their gender. Throughout this research, it is apparent that poverty is one of the major factors and underlying issues encouraging gender inequalities within education, with many girls being pushed into marriage as a means of a quick but short solution to poverty. Although obvious gender inequalities still exist within education, COCO's schools for life have proven to have made positive change by addressing the issue of gender inequality and setting up schools for life to encourage education among both girls and boys. COCO have supplied the facilities needed to make education more accessible for children and young adults.

This research will have an impact on COCO and possibly other international development organisations who aim to explore gender inequality in East Africa. After conducting this research, any future research should explore the effects of poverty on gender equality and the attitudes of people within the wider community. This would be to determine whether these wider issues and agents are responsible for influencing young people's ideologies of

gender and education in East Africa. Furthermore, as there was little research available on changing gender roles, this could be another possible area for further research.

Appendix

STUDENT

BASIC INFO

1. How old are you?
2. Are you a male or female?
3. What class are you in?
4. Which school is the student attending?
5. Do you think that coming to school is improving your life? Why?
6. If a girl and a boy both study hard will they get the same grade?
7. Who do you think face more challenges in school? Why?
8. Has there been any change made to your school to make it easier for everyone to attend?
9. Is it easier now for girls to go to school than 5 years ago? Why?
10. Is it better or worse if girls and boys are made to learn the same subjects? Why?
11. Do you think boys would do better in school if it was boys only school? Why?
12. Do you think girls would do better in school if it was girls only school? Why?
13. If you had a problem in school, who would you tell? (can pick more than 1 rank 1-6)
 - a) Head teacher
 - b) Female teacher
 - c) Male teacher
 - d) Female relative
 - e) Male relative
 - f) Friend
14. Are female teachers respected the same as male teachers
 - a) By male teachers
 - b) By pupils
15. Have you ever heard of or seen a pupil being treated unfairly at school?
16. Do you think teachers treat boys and girls in the same way? Eg.punishment, help given etc.
Please explain
17. Do you think girls learn better when they are taught by a female teacher or a male teacher?
18. Do you think boys learn better when they are taught by a male teacher or a female teacher?

FUTURE –HOPE AND DREAMS

1. 5 years ago what did you think you would have achieved by now? Why?
2. Where and what do you think you will be doing in 5 years from now?
3. What can a boy do that a girl can't do?
4. What can a girl do that a boy can't do?
5. How is a girls role different or the same to a boys?
 - a) At school
 - b) At home

c) At work

6. Of the following jobs which do you think male or female can do? Put a M for males and F for females can do. You can put both M and F for each job if you want.

COMMUNITY

1. Your age
2. Your job
3. Where you live (Name of the village or street)
4. Do you think education helps to improve student's life?
5. If a girl and a boy both study hard will they get the same grade?
6. Who do you think face more challenges in school? Why?
7. Is it better or worse if girls and boys are made to learn the same subjects? Why?
8. Is it easier now for girls to go to school than 5 years ago? Why?
9. Do you think boys would do better in school if it was boys only school? Why?
10. Do you think girls would do better in school if it was girls only school? Why?
11. Are female teachers respected the same as male teachers
 - A. By male teachers
 - B. By pupils
12. Do you think girls learn better when they are taught by a female teacher or a male teacher?
13. Do you think boys learn better when they are taught by a male teacher or a female teacher?
14. What can a boy do that a girl can't do?
15. What can a girl do that a boy can't do?

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