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ARTICLE

Tanzania's higher Education Market Policy Reforms and the Quest for Fulfilling the Core University Mission

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ABSTRACT

Background/purpose – The purpose of the study was to explore how the implementation of Market Policy Reforms (MPR) has contributed to public higher institutions (HEIs) achievement of the core mission of excellence in teaching, innovative research, and academic publications.

Materials/methods – It employed a qualitative approach with a multiple case design. Data were collected from two public universities through interviews, focus group discussions, and documentary reviews. Primary data were thematically analyzed and presented as excerpts and narrations. Secondary data were presented in tabular format and illustrative figures.

Results – The findings showed that expansion in student numbers was disproportionate to the resources available. Teaching and assessments were emphasized at the expense of other core functions. Research and publication outputs were dependent on donor funding and international collaborations. Universities have built partnerships with communities, albeit on a small scale. The financial position of universities has improved but revenue streams have not substituted government subventions as a core source of funding.

Conclusion – The study concluded generally that MPRs have not significantly solved problems adversely affecting the quest by universities to achieve their core mission.

Keywords – Higher education, Neo-liberal policies, Market policy reforms, Tanzania

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1. INTRODUCTION

Higher education institutions (HEIs) have a unique role in society as key contributors to socioeconomic development by producing and disseminating knowledge, skills and incubating scientific and technological innovations (Cloete et al., 2011). According to Altbach (2013), investment in higher education (HE) has to be given priority because it is the basis for a competitive edge in the knowledge economy. Universities produce both a critical mass of human capital and technology needed for social economic development (Adamu & Adammu, 2012). That human capital, social capital, knowledge accumulation, productivity and their realization are drivers of economic development instigated Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) investment in HE (Kruss et al., 2015; Pillay, 2011; Unterhalter & Allais, 2022).

The provision of HE in Tanzania began in 1961, soon after the country's attainment of political independence. Evidence shows that the first HE institution in Tanzania was the University College of Dar es Salaam as an affiliate college of the University of East Africa. In 1970, the college became an independent fully-fledged national university, the University of Dar es Salaam (Mkunde et al., 2003). The World University Service held its General Assembly at Dar es Salaam University College at the end of June 1966; in the opening address, the president of the United Republic of Tanzania said that the role of a university in a developing country "...is to contribute; to give ideas, manpower, and service for furtherance of human equality, human dignity, and human development" (Lema et al., 2005, p. 33). For three decades, from 1961 to the early 1990s, higher education in Tanzania was publicly provided and largely financed by the state (Mgaiwa & Kapinga, 2021).

From the mid-1980s, Tanzania, one of many countries in SSA, adopted neo-liberalism, a market-oriented approach to guide its political and economic development paths. The introduction of neo-liberal policies with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs) had an associate in the form of fiscal austerity and redirecting investment to macro-economic equilibrium, stability and management as "sine qua non" for resuscitating ailing economies (Kentikelenis et al., 2016). This entailed the state radically altering its financing role in relation to social services and patronage for higher education (Bailey et al., 2011). The declining public financial support arguably triggered the Market Policy Reforms (MPR) in public HEIs (Varghese, 2016). The main aim was to diversify financial resources and improve internal processes, performance, and productivity as a survival strategy amidst macro-economic disequilibria and subsequent structural adjustment initiatives (Ishengoma & Vaaland, 2016). The outcome included HE expansion in terms of the number of students and institutions and diversity in the degree programs offered. For instance, by 2019, Tanzania had 43 universities and university colleges with a total enrollment of 209,144 students (Tanzania National Bureau of Statistics, 2020).

1.1. *Aim of the Study*

Since the inception and implementation of MPRs in public universities and other public HEIs in Tanzania, little is known about whether or not the reforms resulted in the improved provision of public higher education. Suffices to note, although a plethora of studies exist on higher education policy and practice in Tanzania (Dachi, 2021; Komba, 2017; Makulilo, 2012; Mgaiwa 2018b; Mgaiwa & Ishengoma, 2023; Mgaiwa & Ponsian, 2016; Mkude, 2011; Sanga, 2012;

Sarakikya, 2014; Watengere, 2016), literature focusing on the impact of MPRs in higher education is still somewhat limited, suggesting a paucity of empirical research and limited theoretical work undertaken in this problem area. Therefore, the current study sought to narrow this gap.

Specifically, the current study aimed to answer three key questions: 1) What are the trends of access to higher education, represented by enrollments in HEIs? 2) What are the trends of innovative research and publications output? and, 3) What are the trends of contributions from universities to their community? Ideally, through this study we have sought to understand, acknowledge, and document the contribution of MPRs to public HEIs' quest to fulfill their core mission of teaching excellence, research excellence, and service to their community.

Following this Introduction section, the remainder of this article is organized as follows: Section 2 reviews the related literature, whilst Section 3 highlights the methodological aspects of the study. Section 4 then presents the study's results, and Section 5 discusses these results. Section 6 presents conclusions that emerged from the results and discussion. Finally, Section 7 provides a summary of suggestions emerging from the results, discussion, and conclusions.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. *The Concept of Higher Education*

HE is recognized as the highest level of education in academic institutions dedicated to enhancing individual's professional and intellectual development. It is instrumental for innovation, competitiveness, enterprise, and continuing academic excellence (Singh, 2011). Many countries make efforts to invest in higher education because they expect to benefit from its contribution to national development in three ways; first, they are producers and distributors of general knowledge and skills. Second, they are producers of skilled personnel in professions related to science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM), social sciences, and also humanities. Third, they are producers of intellectuals responsible for scientific research, innovation, and knowledge generation, sharing, and dissemination (Adamu & Addamu, 2012; Qureshi & Khawaja, 2011).

Generally, the developmental objective of HEIs is to produce a quantity and quality of human capital with the necessary knowledge and skills to address the social and economic challenges facing society. Universities in particular, are viewed as knowledge, technological, and entrepreneurial hubs for finding solutions to those challenges. A review of SSA universities' strategic plans invariably show clear and well-articulated vision and mission statements. Their core mission being to excel in three critical functions; teaching, innovative research, and outreach activities (Zeelen, 2012).

2.2. *Market Policy Reforms in Public Higher Education Institutions*

There is a consensus that the origin of the most recent crises in higher education in SSA could be associated with the economic crises faced by many countries on the African continent from the 1970s. Many governments have faced severe balance-of-payment deficits, turning

to bilateral, multilateral, and private international financiers for short- and long-term credit (Boit & Kipkoech, 2012). Consequently, SSA countries adopted neo-liberalism characterized by the rule of the market, cutting public expenditure for social services, deregulation, privatization, and replacing the concept of “the public good” with “individualism.” The World Bank and the IMF finance-driven policy measures of the 1980s axed subventions to social services, including education (Gudo et al., 2011). Public HEIs were gradually underfunded by the treasuries, with funds allocated below the requested recurrent and developmental budgets. This declining public financial support triggered the adoption of MPRs in public HEIs. The foci were on diversifying sources of revenue, cost cutting, operational efficiency, productivity, and response to consumer demands. This led to the partial privatization of public HEIs through cost sharing, the commercialization of core functions, and the corporatization of HEIs’ management and governance. It is arguable, therefore, that the implementation of MPR helped many public HEIs to survive the fiscal crisis (Ngawaiya, 2018a).

The resultant improved financial position contributed to an expansion of HE systems, increased research output, helped in arresting the “brain drain,” improved market relevance of courses, and reduced over-reliance on state funding (Varghese, 2016). Nevertheless, despite the MPR, recent evidence from Nigeria, Kenya, and Uganda suggest that HEIs in SSA are struggling to survive amidst consistent dwindling financial support (Kolade, 2022; Oketch, 2022; The East African, 2023). Public institutions are still significantly dependent upon government funding, yet governments are walking a fiscal tightrope and do not fund institutions beyond pump-priming levels. Delayed or unpaid salaries, unremitted statutory dues, and piling debts best illustrate the precarious condition in which public HEIs function (The East African, 2023). The result of this toxic mix has been recurrent industrial action, staff lay-offs, the downsizing of campuses, and a deterioration of services with perilous effects on the quality and relevance of HE in SSA.

It is possible to argue that privatization has been used by governments in SSA to abdicate responsibility and forestall the criticism that they are unable to meet the goals of equity and equality of opportunity in HE. Marketization has served to shift the locus of responsibility away from the state towards institutions which are labeled as “providers,” cashing in on the demand for higher education by students who are labeled as “customers.” This raises a fundamental question as to how should public HEIs be run, managed, and financed. The challenge is how to strike a balance between maintaining academic core, which is the *raison d'être* of public HEIs and pursuing commercialization and entrepreneurial interests.

2.3. *The Tanzania Context*

Upon gaining independence in 1961, emphasis was put on human capital development as a key strategy of creating a self-sustaining economic base for the country’s participation in the global economy. Public provision and financing of social services was an incontestable obligation of the state. By the 1980s, the egalitarian expansionary redistributive policies spelled out in political and ideological promulgations were fiscally unsustainable due to the global economic crunch (Dachi, 2018). The IMF and World Bank mandated that economic adjustment and restructuring programs of the 1980s and 1990s ostensibly contributed to the

reduced flow of resources into the social services. Being among the large budget items, but arguably with low social returns, HE was naturally susceptible to budgetary cuts (Sanga, 2012).

Following the diminished government financial support and the reality of insufficient resourcing, Tanzania liberalized its higher education system by encouraging the private sector to establish and run private HEIs, or in partnership with the government (Kossey & Ishengoma, 2017). The focus of MPR was on the privatization of public higher education funding, and the restructuring of management, academic offerings, and institutional systems (Mkunde, 2011). The aim was to supplement insufficient and unpredictable subventions from the state, and to increase HE opportunities for those who demanded it through cost sharing (Ngawaiya & Ishengoma, 2023). MPR, notwithstanding HEIs, operates under fiscal stress. The central government foots 100% of the public HEIs' salary bills and a portion of its development budget. The institutions themselves have to meet the recurrent budget for teaching and learning materials, facilities, and ancillary services. This situation can adversely affect the efficiency and effectiveness of public HEI operations.

Previous researchers have examined the effects of market reforms from the point of view of quality assurance and governance (Ngawaiya, 2018b; Sarakikya, 2014), whilst some have been concerned with external efficiency in relation to employment creation and the marketability of the degree programs provided (Ishengoma & Vaaland, 2016). It can be inferred from the thematic areas that a need exists to widen our understanding of how market policy reforms in higher education institutions have been adopted and implemented in the Tanzanian context.

3. METHODOLOGY

A social constructivism paradigm and qualitative approach were adopted which allowed the researchers to conduct the study and obtain data derived from the participants' own perspectives, socially constructed and shared understanding of what MPR means for HEIs. Attainment of the aim of the study hinged crucially upon the participants' lived experiences on the implementation of MPR in their respective HEI and their understanding on, and interpretation of, the contribution of MPR to the HEIs quest to fulfill their core mission of teaching excellence, dissemination of knowledge, and service to the community. A multiple embedded case study design was employed, collecting data from two relatively large public universities with the assumption that the management, faculty, and administrative staff in those institutions possessed adequate knowledge and experience about their respective HEI's practices, prospects, and challenges in the context of MPR. There is ample prior evidence that the two selected institutions had adopted MPR and had been implemented through Institutional Transformation Programs (ITPs) (University of Dar es Salaam [UDSM], 2015). For the study, each were assigned a pseudonym; HEI A and HEI B.

3.1. *Participants*

The sample consisted of 44 participants, with 10 executive management officers (deputy vice chancellors and directors), two quality assurance officers, 16 other members of staff (academic faculty, technical, and administrative), and 16 students. In selecting these

participants, a purposive sampling procedure was employed based on leadership role, age, gender, primary discipline, and academic rank (faculty members). The use of purposive selection was chosen since it can lead to information rich cases, from which one can learn a great deal about issues of central importance to the purpose of the envisaged research (Kothari, 2009).

3.2. Instruments

Data collection was achieved through interviews conducted with sampled participants, discussions in focus groups, and documentary review. The instruments used were in the form of an organized and structured set of questions for the interviews and focus groups, respectively. A guideline was developed and used for data collection from key documents.

3.3. Procedure

Research clearance was sought from the relevant authorities and the study's data were then collected from two public universities which were each allocated a pseudonym (HEI A and HEI B) to represent public HEIs. Ethical clearance and participants' informed consent were obtained prior to the data collection phase. Primary data were collected through semi-structured face-to-face interviews as well as focus group discussions (FGDs) held with the participants within a 6-month period from June to December, 2020. Data collected from the interviews and FGDs were triangulated with documentary review as a secondary source of data. Documents were reviewed over a 3-month period from January to March, 2021. The key documents of the sampled institutions included facts and figures, strategic plans, and research agendas. The researchers also consulted reports from the Tanzania Commission for Universities, as well as published journal articles, books, and newspaper articles.

3.4. Data Analysis

The data collected from the semi-structured interviews and FGDs were then thematically analyzed. The focus was to interpret and understand the words, themes, and concepts within the MPR domain. The data from the interviews and FGDs were sorted, analyzed, compressed, and assembled. Finally, summary data were presented in accordance with themes that best represented the core mission of HEIs as the participants' voices through vignettes, narrations, and excerpts. Data from the documentary review were analyzed and presented in the form of illustrative figures, tables, and quotations.

4. RESULTS

The study examined the contribution of MPR to the public HEIs' quest to fulfill their core mission of teaching excellence, dissemination of knowledge, and service to the community. The results are presented in three subsections under broad themes corresponding with the key research questions that the study sought to answer.

4.1. Access to Higher Education Trends

Table 1 and Table 2 present the expanded enrollment of students in the sampled HEIs for periods covering a number of academic years. This trend suggests that the HEIs were fulfilling

their core mission of developing human capital through various academic programs representing professions that Tanzania as a country requires to meet its socioeconomic development agenda.

Table 1. Student enrollment at HEI A (2011-2012 to 2016-2017)

Academic Year	2011-2012	2012-2013	2013-2014	2014-2015	2015-2016	2016-2017
Female	8,116	8,147	7,654	8,795	9,201	9,896
Male	12,213	13,915	13,956	15,743	18,202	19,229
Total	20,329	22,062	21,610	25,538	27,403	29,125
% Female	40	37	35	36	34	34

Comparatively, whilst HEI A demonstrated a positive impact of MPR through increasing enrollments, this masked a negative picture in the form of under representation of female students in the HEI compared to their male counterparts. Another emerging picture is the dramatic increase in the number of students which has not been matched by the available teaching and learning resources. In this regard, one of the interviewees stated:

Honestly speaking, as the number of students increases each year in this institution, the number of students in my class also expands. However, the teaching environment and materials facilitating the teaching process remain the same. (Interview: Staff 01, September 17, 2020)

Table 2. Student enrollment at HEI B (2010-2011 to 2019-2020)

Academic Year	2010-2011	2011-2012	2012-2013	2013-2014	2014-2015	2015-2016	2016-2017	2017-2018	2018-2019	2019-2020
Female	2,737	3,177	3,535	4,153	5,196	5,402	5,550	5,340	5,795	5,669
Male	3,428	4,016	4,309	4,803	5,839	5,880	5,812	5,470	6,075	6,298
Total	6,165	7,193	7,844	8,956	11,03	11,28	11,36	10,81	11,87	11,96
					5	2	2	0	0	7
% Female	44	44	45	46	47	48	49	49	49	47

Interviewees from HEI B correlated expansion of enrollment with income generation as a solution to the financial stress of HEIs:

The increase in enrollment has also meant an increase in the institution's income. The overall budgetary allocations from the government to higher education institutions are declining in real terms...The Institution has to find alternative ways of generating income to supplement government subventions... (Interview; EMO 4, September 15, 2020)

I would like to have fewer students so that I can match them with the available human resources. I am in the management team...they [the HEI] also need money, so how do you balance the two? It is problematic! The challenge we are facing is the number of applicants who outweigh the university's capacity. Invariably, 3,000 plus applicants apply for a program which has the capacity of admitting 150 students. (Interview: Staff 08, September 29, 2020)

The narrations imply that inadequate funding necessitates the need to admit students in large numbers in order to generate income from tuition fees and direct costs payable to the institutions. This is a subtle agenda subsumed within the broader goal of expanded access to higher education. It appears that the HEIs' focus was on student enrollment, which at best are proxies for quantitative expansion at the expense of things that really make a difference in the teaching and learning process such as quality of available physical facilities and infrastructure. In that regard, a director from one of the sampled institutions was asked to outline the measures employed to maintain the quality of education and subsequent academic reputation of the institution.

We used to have what we call a standard semester...It was for the purpose of enrolling students who could not get admission at the beginning of the academic year in the first semester. This arrangement ceased to work from last year. The university established new campuses instead to accommodate a surging number of applicants. The first is found in Dar es Salaam City [Dar es Salaam Campus] and the second in Mbeya City [Mbeya Campus]. (Interview: Staff 02, September 17, 2020)

Therefore, from this statement, it seems that, on the one hand public HEIs are bursting at the seams due to expanded enrollment. On the other, partial privatization of higher education has created an opportunity for institutions to generate income and mitigate the impact of declining governmental budgetary allocation.

4.2. *Innovative Research and Publication Trends*

Data collected from the documentary review revealed that the number of research projects undertaken during the 10-year period 2010-2011 to 2019-2020 was inconsistent. Figure 1 illustrates this finding with regards to HEI A.

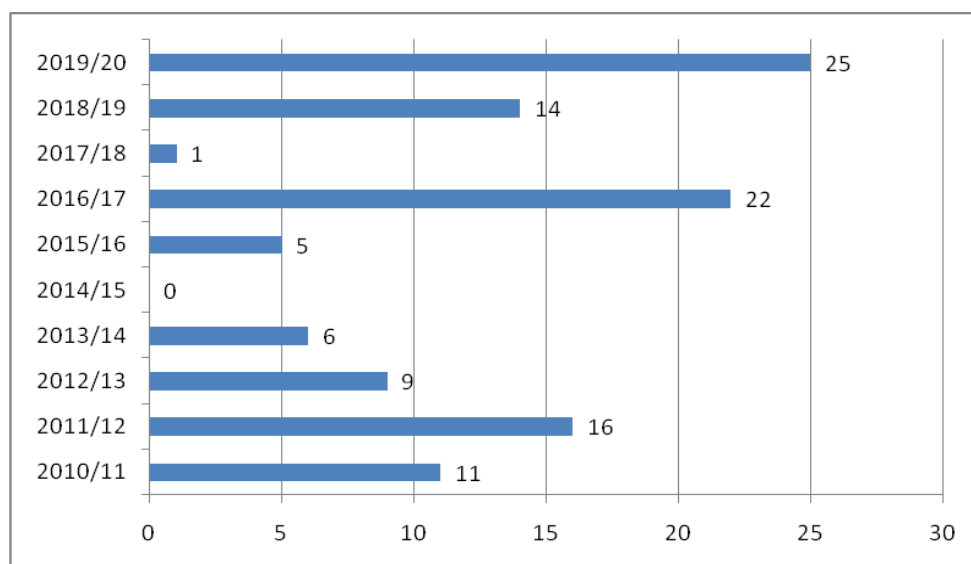


Figure 1. Research projects undertaken at HEI A (2010-2011 to 2019-2020)

The number of research projects steadily declined from 16 in 2011-2012 to zero in 2014-2015. The number gathered momentum again as from 2015-2016, then fluctuated. According to the respondents, the major reason for the observed fluctuation was the

shortage of funds available to conduct research projects. Arguably, MPR has served to shift the locus of responsibility for funding many of public HEIs operations away from the state towards a corporate direction. Therefore, it is the responsibility of the HEIs themselves to attract adequate funding from alternative sources including donor funding for their research projects. This view was supported by one of the top university executives who lamented that:

MPR affects research in the sense that the government does not fund recurrent expenditure in which allocations to research, one of the university's core functions, would have been made...the university has cast the resource net wider to include donor funding...research relies heavily upon support from international development partners and research organizations. (Interview: EMO 04, September 18, 2020)

However, the respondents were also skeptical of the donor funding model since it invariably has certain attached conditions and is mostly serving an international economic agenda. It was argued, for instance, that in most cases such funding “tends to target extractive sectors and impacts of climate change and COVID-19 on the global economy and supply chains” (Interview, Staff 11, September 30, 2020). This observation suggests that a fluctuation in the number of research projects is an illustration of unpredictability and unsustainability of the donor funding model for research and development.

Figure 2 indicates an increased number of research projects undertaken at HEI B during the period covering 2013-2014 to 2016-2017.

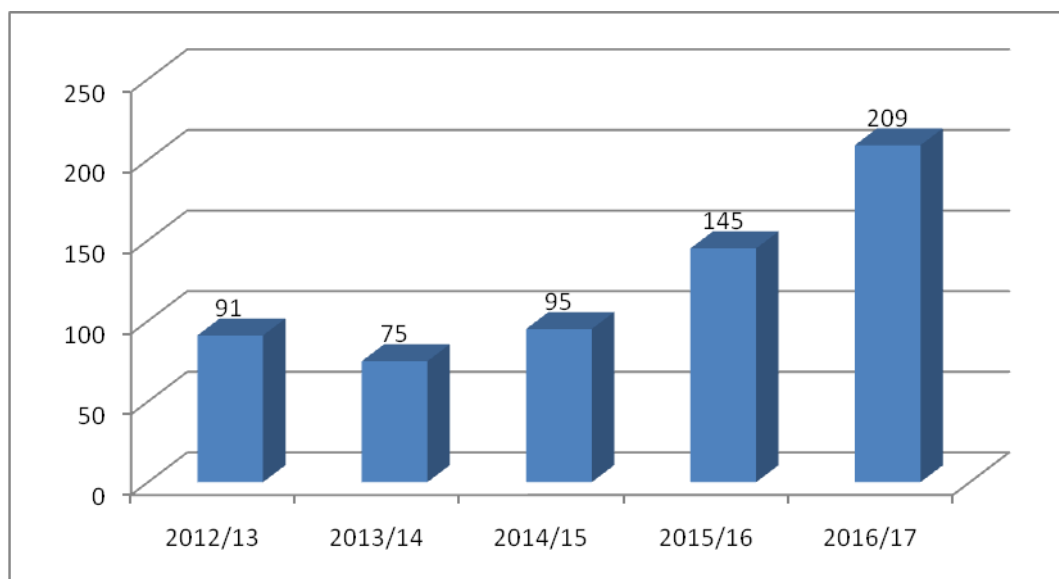


Figure 2. Research projects undertaken at HEI B (2012-2013 to 2016-2017)

The picture that emerges from Figure 2 reinforces the concept that the implementation of MPR has positively influenced research activities in HEIs. Limited government funding available to HEIs in general and the government's removal of research funding from its recurrent budget to HEIs in particular was a catalyst for HEIs to embrace marketization policies. Nevertheless, despite HEI B's privatization, donors still play a significant role in the funding of research and subsequent publications. In that regard, one of the respondents stated that:

The upward trend in the number of research projects has been consistent in these 2-3 years [2014-2015 to 2016-2017]. Most of the projects were funded through international organizations. Before this, only a few staff were involved in research and did little research owing the limited funds received from donors. (Interview: Staff 12, September 30, 2020)

Table 3 shows the publication output of HEI A during the period 2010-2011 to 2019-2020. The quantity of journal articles published is relatively substantial compared to other publication types, with increases also seen each year compared to these other types. One reason was pointed out by an interviewee, who stated that, "Papers that are published out of research have an added value beyond epistemic benefits of findings when used by academics for promotion from a lower rank to a higher one." (Interview: Staff 09, September 18, 2020).

Table 3. Types and Number of Publications at HEI A (2010-2011 to 2019-2020)

Publication Type	Academic Year										Total
	2010 to 2011	2011 to 2012	2012 to 2013	2013 to 2014	2014 to 2015	2015 to 2016	2016 to 2017	2017 to 2018	2018 to 2019	2019 to 2020	
Book	6	21	5	10	3	5	3	0	2	1	56
Book chapter	35	20	13	7	12	16	22	3	24	16	168
Teaching manual	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
Research report	7	10	8	6	0	6	0	0	0	12	49
Case report	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	2
Conference paper	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	3	0	0	5
Journal article	47	89	113	123	103	106	52	23	72	104	832
Total	96	140	140	146	118	133	79	31	98	133	1,114

Other interviewees considered that writing journal articles was less costly in terms of time and finances compared to publishing books. Besides, the universities have recently introduced a policy that Ph.D. candidates should publish articles co-authored by their supervisors in what are termed as reputable refereed journals in partial fulfillment of the requirements for graduating. It is possible, therefore, that this requirement has contributed to the number of published journal articles in both local and international outlets. This was unveiled during the FGD:

For undergraduate students publishing a paper is not mandatory; however, a student can conduct research and publish if in position to do so...Our focus is on continuous assessment and passing final university examinations. (FGD: Student X, September 30, 2020)

Postgraduate students have to write and publish research papers in journals in the course of their studies. One and two papers are mandatory for Masters and Ph.D. students, respectively. (FGD: Student Y, September 30, 2020)

The same picture is evidenced in Table 4, which shows the output of HEI B for the period 2012-2013 to 2016-2017. The number of published books, book chapters, and research reports was lower than for journal articles. This may suggest that, currently, academics have lost interest in publishing books, possibly because they are considered to be more time-consuming compared to writing journal articles.

Table 4. Types and Number of Publications at HEI B (2012-2013 to 2016-2017)

Publication Type	Academic Year					Total
	2012-2013	2013-2014	2014-2015	2015-2016	2016-2017	
Journal article	298	659	461	337	354	2,109
Book		14	4	6	19	43
Book chapter		31	25	25	19	100
Research report	136		29	21	25	211
Conference paper	170	128	86	151	94	629
Total	604	832	605	540	511	3,092

The implementation of MPR in the HEIs negatively affected the number of innovative research projects undertaken and studies published, whilst having a positive influence on access to higher education, as shown from the student numbers having increased each academic year. However, the increases in student numbers also translated into additional workload for the faculty members. The job description for academics requires them to balance their time between teaching, research, and consultancy or service to the community, with no one core function to have a larger share of effort at the expense of the others. Yet, the HEIs were found to interact with their students more as customers since they pay tuition fees, and thereby respond to their needs and preferences more as consumers in order not to lose them to the competition. It is clear that the teaching function receives greater attention and time than research or consultancy. During the interviews, some of the faculty academics mentioned the following:

The research component is affected because the emphasis of HEIs in terms of time and resources is on teaching and assessment. We have large class sizes. For example, my undergraduate course has more than 2,000 first-year students. Nevertheless, we have to publish because publications define what we are as academics...not for the sake of promotion but for horizontal career development. Publishing should be our culture. I consider publication to be more of a culturally oriented function than one imposed by bureaucratic rules and procedures governing vertical career progression. (Interview: Staff 09, September 18, 2020)

Academics are very well aware of the popular notion of 'publish or perish.' They have to publish their work in high-ranking, peer-reviewed journals to be able to climb the career ladder for job security...The problem is academic journals branded as 'reputable' or

ranked as level one or 'A' are disproportionately placing a high premium on empirical data analysis and empirical findings over qualitative research...research grants also disproportionately target STEM areas over the social sciences...(Interview: Staff 07, September 18, 2020)

Another staff member also added that:

Publications tend to add a considerable workload for staff. With many undergraduate students to teach and postgraduate students to supervise, time allocation skews more towards teaching than other functions. Yet, you have to 'publish or perish.' This is the tyranny of institutional human resource policy. (Interview: Staff 05, September 18, 2020)

These excerpts imply that MPR has affected the balance of time and effort put into the three core functions of HEIs. Whilst academics publish primarily for promotion purposes, this could become a problem in terms of producing innovative research and publications. Research should be conducted for the purpose of advancing knowledge in order to solve societal problems.

4.3. Community Service Trends

Evidence from the document review revealed that the sampled HEIs offered diverse community services. These are also known as public services, since they also include consultancy works and outreach programs. Figure 3 shows that HEI A offered 300 short courses and consultancies during the period 2010-2011 to 2019-2020.

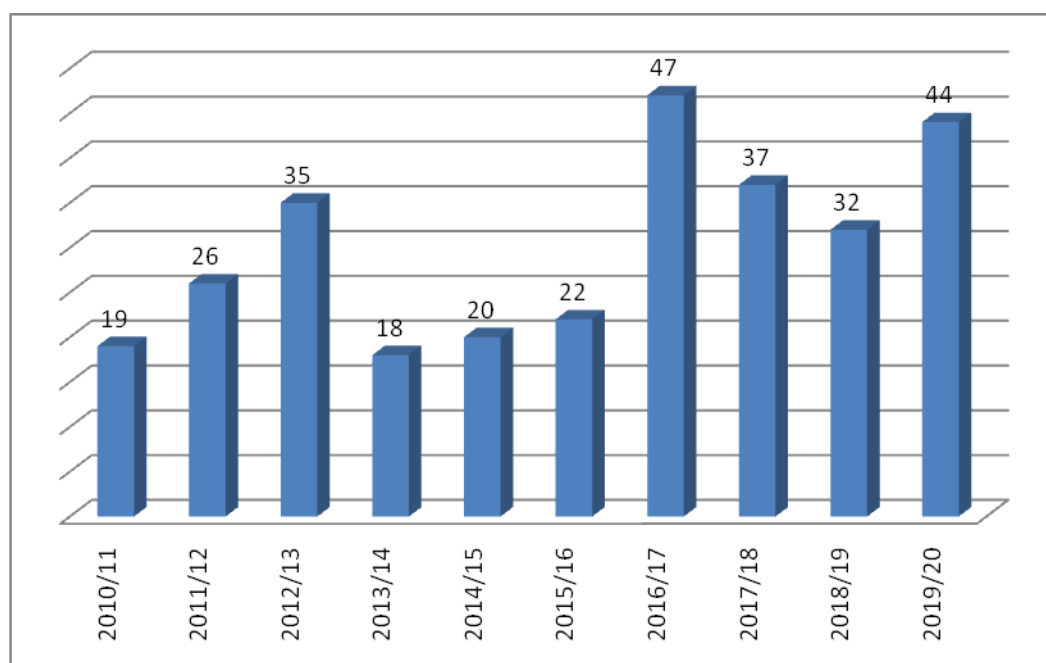


Figure 3. Short Courses/Consultancy Assignments for HEI A (2010-2011 to 2019-2020)

The data illustrated in Figure 3 is not disaggregated to show the number of short courses and that of consultancy services offered, nor the value of funds generated from these services.

However, it does point to an average of 30 assignments undertaken each academic year at HEI A.

Figure 4 shows that a total of 450 consultancy projects were conducted by HEI B from the 2013-2014 academic year to 2016-2018. This points to an average of 110 consultancies in each academic year. It should incidentally be noted that MPR denotes the supply of collective higher education services along market lines where purchasers look for quality services and value for money at competitive prices.

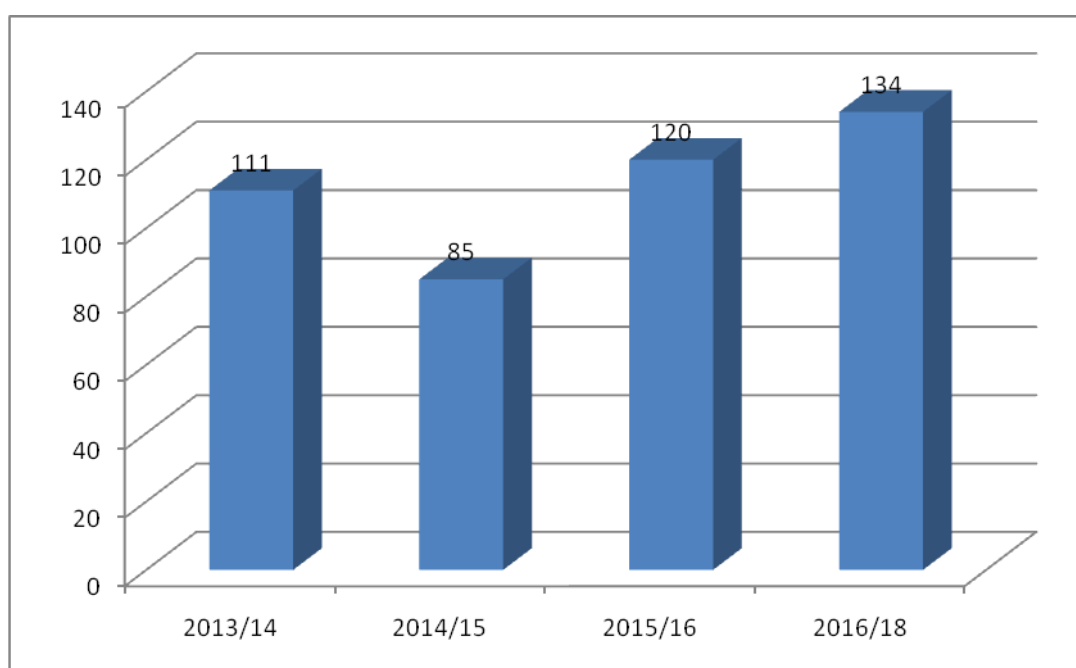


Figure 4. Consultancy Projects for HEI B (2013-2014 to 2016-2018)

It was also revealed that HEI B had established institutional structures that dealt with public services. For example, one of the directors said plainly that:

We have the directorate of Extension Services and Community Engagement to ensure that universities reach out to the community. (Interview: EMO 03, September 19, 2020)

Similarly, another interviewee commented that:

Political democratization has had a tremendous impact...with people far more aware of their fundamental rights than before. However some rights, for example those related to property, inheritance, and matrimony have legal implications...litigations are complex and too expensive to be afforded by the majority of people. The university's School of Law runs legal clinics free of charge as a contribution to the community. (Interview EMO 05, September 21, 2020)

The interviews further revealed that HEIs provide capacity-building courses. For example, one staff member said:

One of the many community services offered by this institution is the provision of training to owners of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) to build capacity through capitalization of their business...entrepreneurship and supply-chain

analysis...Trainees can retool their skills at an affordable fee. (Interview: Staff 09, September 28, 2020)

It was further revealed that HEIs have used Higher Education, Science and Technology Exhibitions organized by the Tanzania Commission for Universities, the Tanzania International Trade Fair, as well as manufacturing, engineering, and agribusiness trade as platforms to showcase their products to attract customers and provide services to the public.

5. DISCUSSION

The objective of the current study was threefold: To explore the trends of student's access to higher education, innovative research projects and publication trends, and trends for services that HEIs give to the community and the public in general.

5.1. *Expanded Access to Higher Education*

From the study's findings, one of the strategic options employed to expand participation and access to higher education was liberalization of the higher education sector to allow non-state actors to become involved as providers. Tanzania has had a low participation rate in higher education relative to its population of 61 million, but with higher education now widely perceived by Tanzanian youth as a passport to social and economic mobility, there has been a surging demand for enrollment in the country's HEIs. Marketization and its associate privatization have offered a partial solution to the supply of student education. Through a policy of cost sharing, an increasing proportion of public higher education costs are now borne through private, non-state funding. Marketization and privatization in HE have been accompanied by the establishment of the Higher Education Students' Loans Board to support students in both public and private institutions to meet part of their academic expenses (Mgawaiya & Ishengoma, 2023). Loans amounting to USD 229 billion have been issued to 655,000 beneficiaries over the past two decades (The East African, 2023).

The principal objective of cost sharing and student loans is the expansion of access to higher education. This works similar to the voucher system since private universities are able to attract students by offering undergraduate and postgraduate courses to those affected by the low enrollment capacity of public HE institutions. In Tanzania, there are a total of 53 fully-fledged universities, university colleges, and HE campuses, of which 38 (almost 70%) are privately owned (Tanzania Commission for Universities, 2018b). This concurs with the findings of Mgaiwa and Ponsian (2016), which reported that "public private partnerships" (PPPs) have played a significant role in the expansion of access to higher education by increasing the choices available to students, and consequently an increase in the number of graduating professionals each year. However it does appear that the effectiveness of many HEIs can be negatively affected since their facilities, equipment, and human resource are unable to cope with the ever-expanding student enrollment numbers. This observation was described by a commentary in The East African (2023) as, "...traditionally seen as centers of excellence and research, public universities...have now been reduced to overcrowded halls...and neglected facilities" (p. 5). When the quantity and quality of higher education collide, the quality of graduates as an output, measured in terms of their skills and competencies required in the job market, tend to suffer.

The rosy picture of quantitative expansion is also contradicted by slow progress seen in improving gender parity in higher education. The available statistics show that in the 2015-2016 academic year, the total number of students enrolled in Tanzania's HEIs was 225,330, of which only 79,008 were female (Tanzania Commission for Universities, 2018a), representing just 36.06% of the country's HE student population. Some improvement was seen by the 2018-2019 academic year, with a total student enrollment of 229,049, and 99,901 were female, representing 43.61% of the total enrolled HE student population (Tanzania Commission for Universities, 2018b). The Gender Parity Index (GPI) between male and female students was therefore 0.72 and 0.87, respectively. This trend generally suggests that female graduates have a rather lower representation in the professions pool than their male counterparts. A study by Dachi (2021) illustrated this issue by revealing the beneficiary imbalance of student loans, with more male students than females in STEM-related disciplines. Research has shown that STEM skills in energy, infrastructure, manufacturing, and innovation to increase production in Sub-Saharan Africa are in critical need. A more balanced gender mix in the STEM skills area may help to achieve improved social justice and inclusion through productivity and economic benefits to society (Kolade, 2022).

5.2. *Innovative Research and Publications*

The findings of this study have shown that the number of innovative research projects and publications generally fluctuated. In some years a good publications output was recorded, whereas in others the number was very small. It is arguable that, "research outputs...have remained relatively negligible in the form of publications with very little output visible in commercial form, which results in insignificant contribution to the university's income" (UDSM, 2020, p. 6). Direct institutional allocation has remained a dominant method of funding universities in general and research in particular (Fussy, 2017). For example the UDSM has, as recent as the 2018-2019 financial year, started allocating funds from internal sources to support its own researchers under a competitive research grants model guided by the institution's research agenda (UDSM, 2018, 2020a). This supports the work of Gush et al. (2018), who found that funding was associated with a 6-15% increase in publications. Furthermore, these findings corroborate those of Wang et al. (2012), who revealed that in China, 70.34% of SSCI published journal articles were supported by research funding of some type, among which 89.57% was supported by funding from the National Natural Science Foundation of China (NSFC).

MPR notwithstanding, HEIs struggle to secure funding for innovative research and to publish academic studies. Variations in the number of publications is a function of an HEI's capacity to attract funding and the kind of international collaboration between some HEIs and western researchers and think tanks (UDSM, 2020b). Securing project funding sometimes depends on whether or not the institution concerned was able to fulfill the interest of its donors and whether the project was accepted to be conducted at the university (Ishengoma, 2016). Barrett et al. (2011) went beyond the funding issue to argue that international partnerships and collaborative initiatives hold the potential for research capacity building and improving the impact of research upon policy and practice within diverse contexts.

The flip side of investment in research and development and subsequent publications heavily reliant on external support from developed countries and research institutions signifies a serious deficiency of an HEI's internal capacity to produce quality research (Zeelen, 2012), and has critical ramifications for both the national and institutional research agenda. The Tanzania National Research and Development Plan had set a minimum of 1% of GDP for research and development accessible through the National Research Fund under the Tanzania Commission for Science and Technology [COSTECH] (UDSM, 2015). However, things often turn out somewhat differently in practice. Overall statistics on investment in research and development suggest that an extremely limited amount of government funding is directed towards academic research, less than 1% of GNP as opposed to 3.8% in Central and Eastern Europe and 3.5% in South and West Asia countries (UNESCO Institute of Statistics, 2020). This corollary has been summarized by the UDSM (2020a) as follows, "research funding remains highly foreign-partner dependent with declining government investment in research over the years, while tapping into local donor sources and private sector has remained largely limited...About 97% of UDSM projects are donor funded..." (p. 6).

University budgets include only a minuscule allocation for research, which is so limited and insufficient that it is considered a monumental task for researchers to actually conduct any meaningful problem-solving-oriented research (Mgaiwa, 2018). The research resource net has not been cast wide enough to capture local sources particularly from the private sector, businesses, and from industry. The UDSM (2020b) asserted that, "the uptake of research results...by the industry and policymakers remains minimal, and this leads to a perception of low relevance of research activities done by institutions of higher learning" (p. 12).

The contribution of research in development cannot be overemphasized. The primary goal of research is to serve as an instrument through which to improve living standards by stimulating growth and increased productivity in critical productive sectors of the economy (Gush et al., 2018). At the level of enterprises, research can bring about product innovation and improvement, increased service efficiency, effectiveness, and improved performance in the marketplace. The current study's findings concur with Pinheiro and Pillay (2016), that research provides insight and innovative ideas to better understand various socioeconomic phenomena, and that it facilitates the solving of practical issues faced by society. Researchers in HEIs have to shift emphasis from vertical and horizontal career development in order to integrate a more research and publication focused culture into their teaching (Fussy, 2018). Therefore, regardless of how many students need supervision and courses need to be taught and assessments made, academics still have a significant role to play to ensure that students are well trained with adequate conceptual, technical, and soft research skills for them to function in their future careers. For academic staff, balancing research obligations with the time needed for teaching and administrative work is part of establishing a culture of valuing and recognizing researchers' contribution to a university's core mission.

5.3. *Community Services*

The current study's findings show that besides teaching and research, universities also offer services to their community as one of their core functions. Through community engagement,

lifelong learning [translated as tailor-made short courses for capacity building], and consultancy expertise, Tanzania's HE institutions use their relevant administrative structures to work towards uplifting the socioeconomic well-being of society, with a special focus on disadvantaged communities. Some universities have established partnerships with their local and surrounding communities, albeit on a small scale.

These findings are in line with those of Akpan et al. (2012), that regardless of the type of facilities and essential community services offered by universities, these services can have a far reaching impact on the different challenges facing today's society. Additionally, the current study's findings lend support to the research published by Singh (2011), who advocated the need for universities to share resources, technology, and their innovations with communities and to provide entrepreneurial and leadership skills training to the community through e-learning platforms, evening classes, and through adult education.

The current study's findings have also shown that the concept of public service incorporates consultancy. HEIs, and public universities in particular, have embraced the opportunities presented by today's knowledge economy to function both as consulting firms delivering economic value to the public, as well as commercial-style entities competing for students as clients with private HEIs and for skilled graduates capable of undertaking consultancy assignments. Finally, this type of public service is also based on an agenda, albeit one largely concealed from the communities, of HEIs attracting direct revenue through facilitation fees, consulting fees, and other commissions.

6. CONCLUSIONS

On the basis of the study's results and the presented discussion, the key conclusions to emerge are that the quest to achieve excellence in teaching is curtailed by a university's system which limits its capacity to mobilize the resources necessary to match demand. The expansion of access to HE is of course an excellent ideal, but ought to be achieved without compromising the quality of the education.

Second, institutions struggle to secure the necessary funding to meet the standard threshold for research and publications output. Dependence on external donor support for research and externally funded research collaboration signifies a deficiency in the current system's internal capacity to conceive innovative research projects and to produce quality academic publications. On the one hand there is limited integration of the necessary research culture within the teaching and learning process, whilst on the other is the inference of low research relevance to localized problems, policy, and practices.

Finally, the contributions of universities to their community are quantified as short courses for some form of capacity building and consultancy assignments. The interactive university-community-university and university-industry-university linkages are blurred. Yet, community engagement, consultancy services, and innovative solutions to local problems are but modalities of knowledge exchange and transfer.

7. SUGGESTIONS

Based on the conclusions set out in the previous section, the following major suggestions are put forth.

First, enrollment expansion should be rationalized in order to commensurate available resources so that the quest for achieving teaching excellence is not compromised.

Second, tapping local funding sources in the private sector, businesses, manufacturing and agro-industry could enhance the research excellence capability of universities.

Third, contributions from universities to the community may be difficult to measure, but ought to be substantial in nature. They may take various different forms including debates on policy and discourse, providing social critique, and also expert commentary on issues such as education quality, good governance, food technology, biotechnology, and medical chemistry. Public universities belong to the people. In this regard they need to raise support from within their respective communities. This requires social capital investment in unconventional programs such as community development studies, teacher knowledge stock accumulation, community medicine, indigenous knowledge development, and also rural engineering.

Fourth, there are opportunities for further research to inform the theoretical and conceptual perspectives on MPR. One area that needs investigation is how HEIs can reinvent themselves and realign their core missions to changing the landscapes of curricula, knowledge production, and the development of innovative solutions to society's economic, political, and social challenges. One question that needs answering is whether or not new knowledge and innovation are actually disseminated to and shared with policymakers, government entities, industry experts, businesses, and the broader community spanning boundaries.

DECLARATIONS

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