Institutional and societal factors that impede or promote women access and participation in PhD Education: Case Study National University of Rwanda

By
Verdiana Grace MASANJA
National University of Rwanda
National Context

Rwanda Law requires 30% women representation

On the political front Rwanda has attained this and above

The civil service sector overall has 45.5% women

However further scrutiny shows continued male dominance and stereotyping
Male dominance is positions traditionally occupied by men

- Ministers – 28.6%
- Mayors of Districts – 10.0%
- State ministers – 33.3%
- CEOs of Public Institutions – 33.4%
- Judges of High Courts – 25%
- Ambassadors – 23.8%
- CEOs of Public Institutions – 15.7%
Gender stereotyping persists in civil service

- Ministers – 28.6%
- Permanent Secretaries – 50%
- Mayors of Districts – 10.0%
- Vice Mayors Economic Development – 16.7%
- Vice Mayors Social Affairs – 83.3%
- Sector Executive Secretaries – 9.1%
- Cell Executive Secretaries – 37.7%
Higher education sector status in 2011

In 2011 Rwanda Higher Education Sector had:

Total: 2,412 academic staff, with PhD 367, Masters 1,057, bachelors 846, below bachelors 142.

Women: total 500 (21%), with PhD 45 (12%), with masters 195 (18%), bachelors holders 209 (25%) and below that 51 (36%)

5.9% of all VC were women, 5.0% Deputy VCs for Academic Affairs and 5.3% Deputy VCs Administration and Finance
Like other institutions, NUR undertook efforts to comply with the law.

Major challenge is low participation rate of women academic staff in PhD studies, research and publications.

This affects women attaining academic leadership.

Efforts to bridge the gap started in 2008.

A qualitative study was conducted in 2010/2012 at NUR in 2010/2011 to illuminate factors.
## Trends in gender

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2006</th>
<th>2007</th>
<th>2008</th>
<th>2009</th>
<th>2010</th>
<th>2011</th>
<th>2012</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total No. students</strong></td>
<td>8,091 (27%)</td>
<td>7,048 (25%)</td>
<td>8,350 (31%)</td>
<td>9,948 (30%)</td>
<td>11,994 (30%)</td>
<td>12,366 (30%)</td>
<td>10,966 (30%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>No. Post-grad students</strong></td>
<td>298 (22%)</td>
<td>249 (19%)</td>
<td>275 (18%)</td>
<td>303 (18%)</td>
<td>688 (26%)</td>
<td>1070 (26%)</td>
<td>1,122 (32%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>No. Academic Staff</strong></td>
<td>404</td>
<td>482</td>
<td>515 (21%)</td>
<td>542 (21%)</td>
<td>536 (21%)</td>
<td>504 (21%)</td>
<td>484 (21%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>No. Academic staff with PhD</strong></td>
<td>78 (n. a.)</td>
<td>90 (4%)</td>
<td>110 (9%)</td>
<td>114 (12%)</td>
<td>126 (11%)</td>
<td>111 (13%)</td>
<td>112 (13%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>No. NUR Staff enrolled in PhD studies</strong></td>
<td>17 (6%)</td>
<td>134 (15%)</td>
<td>120 (23%)</td>
<td>71 (31%)</td>
<td>111 (31%)</td>
<td>111 (31%)</td>
<td>101 (37%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# NUR status May 2012

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Staff with PhDs</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Associate Professors</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Full Professors</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heads of Departments</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vice Deans and Deputy School Directors</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deans and School Directors</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administrative and Centre Directors</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Top Executives</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Executive Council Members</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SENATE Members</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BOD Members</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Quantitative data established that:

- Fewer women are employed in academia and they stagnate at junior academic levels.
- Women’s success rates are as good as men's, yet women tend to apply in smaller numbers for academic and senior positions.
- Women take five to ten years longer for promotion than their male counterparts.
- While making efforts to increase the numbers it is necessary first to address women slower career mobility.

29/11/2012
Requires redefining objectives

Core to women’s slow progression is their low participation rate in scholarly works and knowledge generation.

Qualitative study was conducted in 2010/2011 to illuminate factors that prevent women from undertaking PhD studies, research and publishing.

Some of the questions we tried to find answers are given on the next slide.
How does the access, recruitment and promotion of female staff members compare to that of males?

How have members of staff from different categories succeeded in their careers?

What factors constrain men and women from pursuing research and publishing?

How has day-to-day faculty work interfered with or stimulated the working life of women as compared to men in terms of involvement in research and publishing?

What kind of gendered knowledge exists at NUR and how this affects their jobs?

How do the career aspirations of women interface with gender inequality at NUR and with family and society?

What factors foster women's involvement in research and publication in some areas but not in others?

What are the home-based factors that hinder women in their career choices?

How do cultural conventions prevent women from being active in academia?
FINDINGS

Factors preventing female academic aspirations

Institutional level
- gender neutral institutional policies and practices
- workload
- lack of encouragement available for women to engage in research and publications
- Institutional culture: vertical relationships where one party holds power, knowledge and responsibility
- lack of deep knowledge of gender
- Non availability of PG & PhD programs

Individual
- commitment to family
- not interested in further career aspirations
- less confidence
- personal problems

Family
- Family duties and children
- gender inequality at family level
- lack of support at family level

Culture
- conventional cultural beliefs

Societal level
Work Load

Unequal distribution of workload due to the vertical relationship that exists between higher occupational status (mainly male) and low status (mainly women) – in addition to teaching

- secretarial,
- helping out,
- Takes over as male go abroad on study leave
Research and Publications

Not involved in research as research assistants and co-publishing like male peers:

- perceived to have too much to do at home (views of management and male colleagues),
- lack of role models hence no motivation,
- lack of confidence,
- afraid of rumours, jealousy husbands.

29/11/2012

Educaid Conference 2012 Masanja presentation on NUR
Concern and suggestions

- Concern on the gap in knowledge production if based only on male perspectives was also raised.
- More support for gender sensitisation and gender based research is needed.
- And policy of including both men and women junior staff in research and co-publishing is needed.
Institutional culture and power structure

The society is still patriarchal and this is reinforced at institutional level.

Women are few and invisible even where they exist.

Need to create a more inclusive atmosphere that does not jeopardise academic quality:

- Selection criteria re-examination,
- affirmative actions.
PhD Studies by women

- PhD is prerequisite to senior academic and decision making positions, lack of women in decision making leads to gender discrimination.

- Conflict between reproductive rights and career as women; PhD training mostly abroad in taking four to five years: Women have small children, the choice is between their children or PhD studies.

- Men do that without hesitations.
Family and Societal factors

Factors at family and societal level include the long held traditional beliefs – even when husbands are ready to help, women hesitate – e.g. help in house chores, taking turns to go for studies while men take care of children.
The study confirmed that society at large plays a role in creating and reinforcing a gender division that shapes the institutional culture, which in turn influences the creation of career aspirations of both sexes.

Only people can make organisational change happen; policies consist of a set of guidelines.

Organisational culture and various functions are strongly influenced by the way things have always been done.
Transformation requires readiness

For a successful transformation both men and women, in senior and junior ranks, must be ready and committed to bringing forth change.

Everyone must understand the reasons for change, and these must be explained clearly through dialogue.

It could be argued that the obstacles female academics face at different levels need to be fought officially at the institutional level and through the targeting of managers, teachers, families and community members.
NUR has started the journey

Women focused programs
- Flexible PhD program for women
- In-house PhD program
- Women mentorship program

Gender policy and strategic plan
- Gender training,
- Gender research
Thank You