



HEHD POLICY BRIEF

HIGHER EDUCATION AND HUMAN DEVELOPMENT IN TANZANIA

POLICY BRIEF

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About this brief

This brief considers the developmental role of universities in Africa. It focuses on the contribution of universities to human development and to the public good in Tanzania. The brief is addressed to educationists, scholars and policymakers who are concerned with university education and sustainable human development in developing countries like Tanzania.

Research Problem

Globally, there has been growing recognition of the value and importance of universities to individuals, families, and nations. This can be seen in the rapid expansion of higher education institutions, increased enrolment, the ongoing linking of university education to issues of development, as well as investment directed towards the sector. Yet, the valuing of universities is aimed predominantly at their role in economic growth, competitiveness and opportunities. This focus has been criticised by those scholars, policymakers, and commentators who argue that universities should also be valued for their potential to advance non-economic aspects that are essential for individual and national flourishing. This argument is premised on the broader idea of universities contributing to human development and the public good. However, relatively few studies have focused on the Tanzanian context and even fewer drawing on the voices of students and graduates as key stakeholders of higher education.

Using human development and the capability approach as an analytical framework, the study, therefore, explored how universities in Tanzania can enhance valued capabilities (opportunities to be and to do what is valuable in a person's life) and promote the wellbeing of both individuals and the broader society. This approach broadens our understanding of what universities are for.

Research Aim and Objectives

The research explored Tanzanian students' and graduates' perspectives on the value of universities to human development, with a particular focus on how universities can enhance human capabilities and promote the wellbeing of individuals and the broader society. Its objectives were: (1) To investigate Tanzanian students' and graduates' perspectives on how universities can promote human development, and what it means for the public good role of universities; (2) To explore how students and graduates in Tanzania understand the value of universities, as well as the capabilities and functionings they have developed through their university education and expanded their agency; (3) To identify what students' and graduates' experiences and understanding of the value of university suggest about the conditions of possibility of university education from a human development perspective; (4) To review how universities can promote human development and reduce inequalities based on students' and graduates' perspectives; and, (5) To examine what the understanding of the value of universities from a human development perspective adds to debates on the role of universities in Tanzania and more widely.

Methodology

The study reported on used a mixed-methods approach to explore the perspectives of students and graduates (who in 2019 had graduated from university at least three years previously) in two Tanzanian universities, one public and one private. Data was collected through survey questionnaires to all final year students (171 students), semi-structured interviews were conducted with graduates (30 graduates) and with 8 university officials, focus group discussions were held with final year students (38 students), and document analysis was undertaken, including Tanzanian higher education policy.

Key findings

Bearing in mind the socio-economic climate of Tanzania as a developing country, findings from the study indicate that instrumental economic perspectives primarily influence valued university education outcomes in Tanzania. Such outcomes enable people to lead economically secure lives themselves, as well as improve the lives of their families and communities. However, there are

instances of concern about wider human development and the public good, especially from the valuable beings and doings mentioned by participants, involving both economic and social values.

The study, therefore, extrapolated the following capabilities (freedoms) that were valued in and through higher education in Tanzania. They are presented here for debate and discussion.

1. *To be able to access university.* The ability to achieve the grades, access information and funding to be able to gain admission to a university.

2. *To be able to work after university.* Being able to gain knowledge and skills for career and economic opportunities (being employable, being able to generate self-employment); to have an income/livelihood.

3. *To be able to be a responsible person.* Being able to manage or take control of the different facets of a person's life.

4. *To be able to have knowledge and awareness (to be able to be a critical thinker).* Being able to gain an understanding of issues. Awareness in critical and complex questions about society. Being able to debate complex matters. Being able to acquire knowledge for pleasure and personal development.

5. *To be able to have and give respect and recognition.* Being able to recognise and respect other people and groups different from your own.

6. *To be able to be confident.* Being able to visualise and care for yourself as you want to be. Belief in your ability, skills, and experience.

7. *To be able to develop and be involved in positive social relations and social networks.* Being able to form networks of friendship and a sense of belonging for learning and collaborations in solving problems.

8. *To be able to have resilience and determination (to be able to have a suitable learning disposition).* Being able to persevere academically, to be responsive to educational opportunities and adaptive constraints, and having aspirations and hopes for a good future.

9. *To be able to be a concerned citizen (to be able to care for and support others' well-being, being public-minded).* Being able to gain education or knowledge to become citizens who are not only concerned with their welfare but also have a sense of identity and interest in social and public affairs.

10. *To be able to graduate from university.* Having the grades to pass and funding to be able to stay at a university.

Nonetheless, while universities enhanced some of these capabilities and the corresponding functionings (achievements) values, there are persistent conversion factors, including socio-economic background, gender, public policy and teaching and learning that constrained students' or graduates' valuable beings and doings. These factors suggest that a transformed and transformative human development-facing higher education in Tanzania will be challenging.

The research indicates that policy, design and implementation of higher education in Tanzania should be underpinned and/or informed by human development constructs to enhance and enrich what individuals' value beings and doings and expand their agency, but also to foster social and economic changes.

Recommendations for educationists and policy makers.

Drawing from the results of this study, for universities in Tanzania to enhance human development, the following is suggested to educationists and policy makers:

- Improve the efficient and equitable allocation of funding (student loans) to students from disadvantaged (low-income) families. This would allow equitable access to university because students from poor backgrounds will be able to pay tuition fees and other expenses. Similarly, the availability of funding will also promote gender equality, as parents might no longer have to opt for only a boy child's education. Preferably, both male and female students will have a chance for schooling with secure funding. However, because Tanzania is a developing country, it is essential to note that this suggestion for the allocation of funding prioritises students from a poor background, and especially women from a poor background.
- Update the curriculum and pedagogical practices for human development outcomes, to include preparation of students for economic opportunities (employment and self-employment), and produce graduates who do not only think of themselves but also are concerned about the wellbeing of others, which means cultivating professionals oriented towards the public good and citizenship values.
- Ensure that there is equitable space for students to participate in decision making and allow them to speak up and be heard on matters that concern their wellbeing and their education.

To conclude, as the first President of Tanzania, the late Julius Nyerere reminds us, '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'.