

Full Length Research Paper

Integrating gender practices in religious education pedagogy in higher education; a case study of school of education, Makerere University, Uganda

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From a pedagogical perspective, religious teaching-learning processes in higher education require more serious focus on present day gender issues than ever before. This is because the female student after leaving school has continued to be marginalized to perform household chores and dominated by her male counterparts who exercise authority over women in the public domain. One hundred and eighty-eight participants were selected for this study. They included teacher trainees offering RE in the School of Education, Makerere University. The study design was qualitative in nature. Interviews, observations and documentary analysis were used to collect and analyze data. The study found that integrating gender-friendly practices in RE pedagogy, significantly increased students' orientations of their mindset orientations towards gender friendly-practices. More specifically, it shows that integrating gender-friendly practices in RE pedagogy can kick-start the slow but steady process of attitudinal and behavioral change regarding gender relations and operations. To this end, the study recommends that integrating critical and sensitive gender issues in RE teaching-learning processes in higher education can be a humble but coherent contribution towards the achievement of sustainable gender-based Development Goals (SDGs).

Keywords: Integrating, gender practices, religious education, pedagogy and higher education.

INTRODUCTION

Gender is defined as socially determined roles and relationships between females and males. It is a social and cultural construct of roles, responsibilities, practices, attributes, privileges, status, access to and control over resources and benefits between females and males in a given society. Gender practices are a social action entrenched in sex role distribution in a given society (Forum for African Women Educationists (FAWE, 2016). Gender practices are set of activities available to be performed in accordance with cultural gender expectations. Gender practices may also be manifested in discourse or the ways in which people talk about gender concept or verbally position themselves in relative to others (Rolleri, 2013; Cregan, 2014). In every society, gender roles are determined by the society which assigns different responsibilities between males and females.

Gender practices can be changed or can vary over time from community to community because these are social constructions. Gender practices are also comprised of activities that are engraved in cultural, religious, social, economic and political dimensions that take connotation of masculine and feminine dynamics. On the other hand, pedagogy includes everything that occurs in a teaching-learning environment. Pedagogy is exhibited in the teacher-learner interaction, class activities and management, methodological approach, teaching techniques, assignments, evaluation, communication and gender sensitivity (UNESCO, 2015). Pedagogy as a concept embraces all teaching and learning that takes place in and outside the classroom. Within the context of classroom settings, pedagogy is a term that includes what is taught, how it is taught, how teaching takes place

and how what is taught is learned (FAWE, 2016; Robinson, 2018). Wikipedia the Free Encyclopedia (2018) defines higher education as post-secondary education or tertiary education that comprises of universities, academies, colleges, seminaries, and other career colleges.

Gender Practices in Religion

Gender practices vary greatly in societies, cultures and historical periods as well as they depend on religious, cultural, socio economic, educational level, age and class settings. Religious teachings promote differentiated gender practices as they are embodied in roles based on sex, where females are relegated to stereotyped roles that include reproduction, domestic work, childrearing and looking after the sick (Krakowski, 2014; UNICEF, 2017). Differentiation of gender stereotype roles date back to the period of Adam and Eve in Genesis 1-3, which shows that Eve was made from Adam and she persuaded Adam to eat the forbidden fruit. These biblical interpretations have been combined with a historical, cultural, political and economic reasoning that strengthen patriarchy, while justifying gender roles and stereotypes (Headrick, Madison, and Megan, 2016). Gender practices raised in Deuteronomy 22; 20 says that; "But if the charge is true and evidence of the girls' virginity is not found, they shall bring the girl to the entrance of her father's house and her townsmen shall stone her to death because she committed a crime against Israel by her unchasteness in her father's house" Deuteronomy is silent about the male who breaks the virginity of the victim but upholds the practice of killing the female.

The Jewish oral law excluded female mothers from teaching the Torah to their sons and daughters. Females were exempted from studying the sacred Torah and reciting prayers in homes and the synagogue (Keren, 2009). Franciscan Media (2018) quotes Rabbi Eliezer, a first-century teacher who said that; "Rather should the word of Torah be burned than entrusted or taught to a woman". Religions play a major part in perpetuating negative gender practices (Burke, Crozier, Read, Hall, Peat, Francis, 2013; Robinson, 2018). Jewish culture in the first century was patriarchal, with a woman's place being in the home, charged with the responsibility of bearing and caring for children, ensuring the wellbeing of the husband, while making sure that the home was well maintained and hospitable. Women were not allowed to leave home, except to the synagogue in the company of the husband or son or male relative. They were under the protection and authority of males and were counted among males' possessions. Males could easily divorce their wives for any reason but the reverse was not allowed (Franciscan Media, 2018)

In the Jewish religion, the practice was that males discriminated females in the place of worship. While in the synagogue, females were restricted to an outer court,

separated from the males with a curtain and were not allowed to read aloud or bear witness in religious courts. Females were not allowed to ask questions regarding religious practices. Hebrew females were among the poorest, had no property rights and even when a female had property it was controlled by the husband (Future Church, 2016). Leviticus 15; 9, stipulates that a menstruating female was unclean for seven days and whoever touched or had sex with her was also unclean and had to undergo ritual purification. Ezekiel 36; 17, compared the sins of Israel, to the uncleanness of a menstruating female (African Bible, 2013; Future Church, 2016).

Gender practices uncover the fact that Jewish religion was anti-female and their daily prayers were an insult to them. Whereas the Torah was given to Israel as a nation, many of its laws applied differently and discriminated females (Harris, 2016). Every male Jew as part of his daily prayer thanked God; "Blessed are you the Lord our God, ruler of the universe who has made me not a woman"(Lizorkin-Eyzenberg, 2017). World religions such as Buddhism, Hinduism, Sikhism, Islam, and Christianity oppress females. Patriarchy restricts leadership roles and decision making to males, although in some religions, females are beginning to break the ceiling (Kristof, 2010). Many world religious groups such as Jews, Catholics, and Moslems allow only men to be religious leaders, although the Pentecostal and Protestant churches have lifted the restrictions to embrace female leaders (Pew Research Centre, 2016). In addition, throughout history, androcentric tendencies were inscribed in biblical and traditions of the church, structures of education, working places, curricula, instructional materials and pedagogy (Headrick, Madison, and Megan, 2016).

Despite campaigns against gender inequality, evaluation of gender practices indicate that students are still socialized from birth into traditional notions of femininity, masculinity and gender stereotypes. Yet, in the 21st century, children should be free to pursue whatever family and career responsibilities they desire. Socialization and stereotyping as a gender practice that goes on in higher education still interacts to limit female and males' opportunities and advancement. Structural obstacles in many aspects of life continue to keep females in a subordinate status compared to males (Creative Commons Affiliate Network, 2012). Available studies indicate that androgyny plays a significant role in religious perspectives in enhancing gender practices and stereotypes. Throughout history, women have been subjected to patriarchy which is embedded in religion. The Greek, Roman, Jewish and African cultures reduce women to the level of possessions. In many institutions of higher learning the majority of females cannot head higher offices of authority (Headrick, Madison, and Megan, 2016; Robinson, 2018). In Ugandan higher education, RE pedagogy of the 21st century can serve to

expose the negative impacts of stereotyped gender practices on learning and future aspirations of students. This can promote a new awareness of gender equality practices that can prompt change among males and females. Gender stereotyped practices embedded in religion have a significant effect on the choices of subjects for study at the higher education level. This explains why more females than males tend to offer Religious Education in higher education (Tuyizere, 2017). Recognizing that religion has been identified as a problem to gender equality practices although it can also be the solution through integrating it in pedagogical approaches.

On the basis of the narratives highlighted above, one can assume that the pedagogical stereotypes reflected in RE lessons are based on the fact that in some religions females can neither be ordained as priests nor officiate mass nor Holy Communion. Stagnaro (2018) argued that any attempt to ordain females is a grave sin that is punishable with excommunication. Ordaining women can destroy the Church's unity by creating a competing authority structure. He also argues that although women and men are equal in dignity before God, this does not mean that both genders are equal in terms of their mission to lead the church. On this note, it is reaffirmed that women can be given roles in the church, but as far as their ordination is concerned, the Catholic Church cannot do anything because dogmatically it is wrong for women to become priests (Inés San, 2018). These religious gender based practices raised above affect the way RE is taught and the manner in which female students are treated in higher education.

Religious education as subject taught in higher education upholds religious teachings which are frequently quoted by male preachers to keep women in submissive positions as in 1Peter; 3, 1-7, "Likewise, you wives should be subordinate to your husbands" (The African Bible, 2013). These religious beliefs and teachings, reinforce patriarchal practices which are also reflected in the teaching-learning processes of RE in higher education. Persistent teachings depict an ideology of female inferiority and subordination which was for centuries so deeply ingrained into the values and cultures of various societies at a global level that it was accepted by women as well as men without questioning it. The narratives cited above seem to suggest that religious stereotypes, discrimination and gender biased role of females in society have not been fully challenged and eliminated in this 21st century. Women's plight of being marginalized, oppressed and dehumanized have been ignored in RE pedagogy despite huge efforts of public awareness and sensitization drives being made to bring these vices into the public domain (Council of Europe on Gender, 2014). In RE, girls continue to encounter many obstacles such as gender insensitive pedagogy in their journey through education systems, despite having access to education in most learning institutions. The role

played by females in promoting equality gender practices has been largely absent from pedagogy of RE.

Religious Education as a subject can be identified as a benchmark that enhances gender practices at all levels. In this context, students are involved in creating knowledge, collaboration, developing skills, empathy and dialogue about gender practices, thus can promote a new awareness of gender equality and can prompt change among males and females. Robinson (2018) challenges RE teacher trainees to rethink their content, methodology, objectives, the language of communication and instructional materials when expounding on gender practices in a classroom environment. Taking this religious background knowledge into account, it is argued that the concept of gender practices which are expressed in equity and inequality stances have a long history of development. They have evolved with different goals, approaches, and strategies and are specific to global and country needs (UNESCO, 2015).

International Instruments that address gender stereotyped practices in RE Pedagogy

In a bid to attain the SDGs, the need to integrate gender practices into RE pedagogy is supported by various international instruments that address gender inequality at various levels. Women's equality and non-discrimination tendencies on the basis of sex were first recognized and established by the charter of United Nations in 1945 and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948. Established landmark Declaration adopted by the General Assembly on 10th December, 1948, reaffirms that "All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights and that everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in this declaration, without distinction of any kind such as race, color, sex, language, religion, birth or another status". Ministry of Gender, Labor and Social Development (2007) and UNESCO (2015) acknowledges that up to the late 1960s, the focus of achieving equality emphasized females' rights such as reproductive roles, access to health care, adequate nutrition and birth control. It is also noted that in the 1970's and 1980's, the focus of gender equality practices on the global stage shifted to the role of women in advancing national and economic development leading to; (1) the birth of Women in Development (WID) approach, (2) the first world conference on women in Mexico in 1975 and (3) the Declaration of the UN decade for women from 1976 to 1985 (UNESCO and UN Women, 2017). Against this backdrop, these international declarations point to the need to integrate gender practices in RE as a subject in higher education. This can in turn promote male participation in female roles without bias or fear and vice versa.

Following the 1979 General Assembly which adopted the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), the convention

targets culture and tradition as influential forces in shaping gender roles, family relations and learning in higher education. Gender practices are also enshrined in CEDAW (1979) in Article 10 which undertook to ensure equal rights for males and females in the field of education. In article 10 (c), States are obliged to ensure the elimination of any stereotype concept of the roles of females and males at all levels and in all forms of education by encouraging coeducation and other types of education which will help to achieve this aim and in particular by the revision of textbooks and school programmes and the adoption of gender sensitive teaching methods. The 1985 World Conference held in Nairobi gave birth to Global Feminism and the document broke a new ground by declaring all negative gender practices that reduced women to secondary citizens. In addition, the Beijing Conference on Women in 1995 asserted women's rights as human rights and committed to specific actions to ensure respect for those rights. Basing on the need for positive gender practices, these international instruments challenge states to address negative attitudes towards women which are based on gender stereotyping. It is against this background that international and regional courts have taken a more gender-sensitive approach in addressing gender stereotypes. UNESCO (2017) points out that achieving gender equality and women's empowerment is integral to each of the 17 SDGs. Women have a critical role to play in all the goals, with many targets specifically recognizing women (UN, Women; 2017). Stakeholders have to ensure that the rights of women and girls across all goals will get justice and inclusion enhance an RE pedagogy that work for all and sustain an enabling learning environment for now and future generations. In this context, there are international instruments that promote positive gender practices in education and RE as a subject of study in higher education. This implies that RE as a subject has the mandate to implement the realization of gender equality practices in response to the call made by international instruments.

The African Charter on Human and Peoples Rights in Africa (2003) Article 22(1e) says; State parties shall take all appropriate measures to integrate gender sensitization and human rights education at all levels of education curricula including teacher training. Considering, Article 27(d) of CEDAW (2017) on education, States shall revise and develop non-stereotypical educational curricula, textbooks, and teaching materials to eliminate traditional gender stereotypes that reproduce and reinforce traditional gender stereotypes that promote more balanced, accurate, healthy and positive projection of female images and voices and Article 27(e) says; State shall institute mandatory training of teaching staff at all levels of education on gender issues and gender sensitivity and the impact of their gendered behaviors and practices on teaching and learning processes.

Evidence of addressing negative gender practices is also found in the Convention on the Council of Europe Gender Equality Strategy (2014) resolution which is about bridging the gap between de jure and de facto equality to achieve real gender equality practices by;

(a) Taking the necessary measures to enhance the role of education in combating gender stereotypes and in promoting gender equality;

(b) Providing both boys and girls with an education free from gender stereotypes and skills for defending gender equality.

In terms of procedure, the convention also requires state parties to take necessary steps to include teaching materials on issues such as non-stereotyped gender roles and integrating good gender practices in the learning environment to promote an education free of discrimination. Among the factors identified that disproportionately prevent females from enjoying their basic human rights to education were gender stereotyped teaching processes and instructional materials. Gender stereotyping continues to influence the treatment, experiences and life choices of females and males during the teaching-learning processes, which has negative consequences on their future aspirations. Article 24 (e) of CEDAW challenges States to institute mandatory training of teaching staff at all levels of education on gender issues, practices, sensitivity and its negative impact on students' gendered behaviors during the learning-teaching processes (CEDAW, 2017).

Females in the third world continue to fulfill gender practices of working like slaves for their husbands, male relatives, and other tribal leaders, yet, this is accepted as normal in the 21st century and religion has remained gender blind. Religion exists in particular structural relation to gender order practices of the society of which it is part. It is mobilized in relation to the existing distribution of secular power and can be used as a means to contest, disrupt, redistribute, distribute and counteract-cultural gender practices that affect females disproportionately (Woodhead, 2012; Krakowski, 2014). Religions' central role in consolidating gender differences and inequality was first recognized, explored and critiqued in the nineteenth century by Elizabeth Cady Stanton, the nineteenth-century feminist. Her sentiments were presented at the Seneca Falls Convention which was held in 1848 in New York. Elizabeth Cady Stanton is credited with initiating the first organized women's rights and suffrage movement (Woodhead, 2012). The Seneca Falls convention was a reaction too, towards female oppression experience in religions which is also reflected in higher education RE pedagogy.

Gender stereotyping in pedagogy continues to be an obstacle to the achievement of gender equality between males and females. Many teachers and guidance personnel in schools either consciously or unconsciously perpetuate gender stereotypes when advising and interacting with their students through pedagogy,

curricula and instructional materials. Yet, teachers play an important role in the holistic development of their students, how they engage, interact and enhance self-esteem of the other gender. Teachers' behavior and gender practices carried out during the execution of pedagogy contribute to the perpetuation of gender stereotyping and gendered self-perception. Teacher trainees, practicing teachers as well as students are challenged to have opportunities to reflect on their own beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors (Council of Europe on Gender, 2014).

Emphasis should be made that Goal 5 of Sustainable Development Goals as a gender practice is to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls. The global consensus is growing and indicates that traditional gender stereotypes and roles are standing in the way for further progress in closing the gender gap. In many countries, women do more unpaid work than men, leaving them with no time for paid work and fewer opportunities to develop their career. Policy makers are thus starting to focus more on a better sharing of responsibilities and domestic work. Given the key role religion plays in shaping attitudes, integration of gender practices in RE pedagogy can be a powerful tool to promote equality while also addressing gender stereotypes and bias. RE pedagogy has the potential to address gender stereotypes and promotion of equitable sharing of roles. It is in this context that RE pedagogy can be used as a strategy to achieve Goal 5. RE pedagogy can promote sharing of work, can break gender stereotyped barriers, with boys and men engaging in caring for children, domestic work and other family responsibilities. Females around the world are speaking up and stepping forward in millions, exposing out the injustices they experience every day (Detoro, 2018). RE pedagogy has a role to play in making learners understand the significance of these international instruments to the realization of gender practice at different levels of life.

Social Construction Feminism Theory

This study adopts Social Construction Feminism Theory which focuses on gender as a determinant of distribution of power, privileges, economic and political resources. According to this theory, gendered norms, practices, and expectations get built into females' and males' sense of self-worth, creating an alternative way of acting, arranging work and family life. Social construction feminism analyses the historical and cultural contexts in which sexual practices are learned and enacted. In this theory, inequality is the core of gendered practices. Males and females are socially differentiated in order to justify treating them unequally, leading to a belief that gendering is biological, therefore, natural and cannot be changed. Social construction feminism focuses on the processes that create gender differences and also

renders the construction of gender invisible. Gendered practices are entrenched in the gendered division of labor in the home that allocates child care, household work, caring for the sick to women; gender stereotyping and segregation in occupations and public space, so that women and men cannot do the same kind of work. Proponents of the theory also argue that the dichotomies of male and female biological sex and physiology are produced and maintained by social processes. Religion, the law, and medicine reinforce the boundary lines between women and men while suppressing gender variations through moral censure and stigmatization such as labeling gender inappropriate behavior sinful, illegal and insane (Lorber, 2011).

Teaching from a constructionist theoretical perspective requires instructors to challenge gender-stereotyped perceptions by engaging students to unpack the how and why of gender practices. Pedagogical approaches should demonstrate how gender can be understood not only as social construction but also as a system of stratification and social structure that can be changed (Berkowitz, Manohar, and Tinkler, 2010). The trio-scholars proposed a pedagogical strategy that is highly effective in conveying the social construction of gender to undergraduates. Central to this approach is the integration and referencing of students' experiences of the understanding of gender so that they are active collaborators in the enhancement of gender equality practices. Gender interactionist theories locate the production of gender practices in every day social conduct. Theorizing the social construction of gender brings together the collective interplay of identities, interactions, and institutions in shaping the gendered distribution of power, privilege, and resources between females and males. The pedagogical approach provides students with a theoretical toolkit to understand the extent to which gender is deeply embedded in personalities, religion, culture, and institutions (Lorber, 2011). Constructivist theory when applied in integration of RE pedagogy and gender practices can demystify the stereotypes of socialization and division of labor based on sex.

Gender Practices in RE Pedagogy

Integrating gender processes in teaching-learning processes of RE at the institutional pedagogical setting require taking into consideration the current trends in education of the 21st century. Gender practices must be integrated especially in the RE pedagogical higher educational contexts since religion and gender practices are interwoven. Historically, religion has played a significant role in spearheading education but educational processes, practices and output were gender-specific. Whereas most religions preach equality of all human beings, this equality was not realized in role distribution, access to education and voting in the previous centuries.

The first women movements' agenda was to fight for gender practices that included among others; equal rights, access to education, voting and involvement in the public space (Berkowitz, Manohar, and Tinkler, 2010). Against this backdrop, integration of gender practices in RE pedagogy can address women's cause to promote equitable access to and participation in opportunities.

Gender concepts in RE always reflect power relations in varying contexts such as family, school, community and other social settings. The authority of males and their dominance over women is reflected in educational contexts and impacts negatively on RE pedagogy, the teacher and content. RE plays a big role in the socialization of males and females which has long-lasting effects on the way individuals of different sexes relate. Concepts of gender practice must embrace changes in structures in families, school and the wider society. Integrating gender practices in RE pedagogy should promote the ability of learners to recognize and identify gender stereotypes, inequalities, biases and be empowered with skills to change them. Students can be involved in the process of promoting gender equality practices by reflecting upon how they relate with each other, how they perceive patriarchal hierarchy and by actively getting involved to change the oppressive structures that dominate women. Pedagogically, teacher trainees should have knowledge and skills to deal with different genders and equitable interaction practices during the teaching-learning process. Integrating gender practices in RE pedagogy can be a benchmark for making the gender-sensitive curriculum, instructional materials and application of unbiased methodologies. Classroom discussion, debates, and learners' experiences can concretize fields of gender practice.

Many institutions of higher learning have been plagued by negative gender practices such as sexual harassment and other forms of gender-based violence among staff and students, as well as favoritism, corruption in altering and awarding marks to students. Such practices are swept under the carpet and not addressed because of students' fear of reprisal, penalties through poor grades and fear of public opinions. Gender inequalities are manifested in many aspects of education which causes systematic discrimination and gender stereotyping (UNESCO, 2015). RE practices paint a mixed picture when it comes to gender equality practices. In the teaching environment, there have been instances where some teachers get too close to students making them uncomfortable by their presence and encroach on the territory of students of the opposite sex.

Teaching-learning processes in RE can only be conducted effectively if teachers are able to identify and address differences between males and females, reducing gender-based stereotyped practices such as unequal treatment of boys and girls when answering questions, marking assignments and participation in lessons. Teachers have the challenge of using

democratic approaches instead of judgmental language to promote positive gender practices (Harris, 2016). Teachers need to relate and communicate to female and male students as individuals, not through gender biased perspectives. Therefore, teachers should conduct their classes in an atmosphere free of gender-biased practices such as equal distribution of questions, using gender responsive or neutral language, sitting arrangements should reflect a good mix of boys and girls. Establishing a gender bias-free learning environment in the class renders the teaching skills and knowledge of handling issues related to gender differences and practices in the school pedagogy (UNESCO; 2015; Queisser, 2016; Tuyizere, 2017). RE teachers need to integrate gender practice strategies in teaching activities to promote equitable access to education.

What happens in RE teaching-learning processes in the classroom plays a big role in determining the course of participation and gender practices in education and the wider society. Concisely, gender roles prevailing in society are consciously or unconsciously replayed in school environment or classroom dynamics by both the teachers and the students. Stereotyped gender practices are exhibited in teaching RE methodologies, teacher-student interaction, school management, and administration, instructional materials and infrastructure. RE Teacher trainees are not always aware of gender-specific practices and needs of male and female students leading them to act out of context. School management rarely addresses gender related constraints such as gender stereotyped teaching practices, sexual abuse, separate toilets for females and males. Many institutions of learning do not provide gender responsive pedagogies environment where gender equality practices can be experienced by students (FAWE, 2016).

Gender Stereotyped Learning-Teaching Environment in RE

Gender role stereotyping occurs when teachers expect students to exhibit different behaviors based on sex. Teacher trainees' language, examples given to concretize learning, actions, and interaction with students' influence gender construction (Hively and El-Alayli, 2014). In most learning-teaching environments, gender roles divide males and females, whereby in some schools, females are made to sweep classes, peel food for kitchen, while behavioral norms are also emphasized, yet they seat the same examinations. Certain types of behaviors are categorized as masculine or feminine, thus, educators expect students to exhibit certain practices or behaviors because of their gender (Save the Children, Kenya, 2014). Although female students' experiences vary, in Uganda, many institutions of higher learning, reinforce and support gender stereotyped roles and behaviors, especially when it comes to how teacher trainees interact with students in their lectures. Note that gender constructs

in the classroom impacts negatively on the learning environment (Tuyizere, 2007).

Gender role stereotypes influence classroom interactions between teachers and pupils. Most of the questions asked by teachers are answered by males who try to seek his/her attention. In contrast, female students are ignored because they do not put up their hands and are more likely to receive criticisms rather than praise. Teachers reward girls for being compliant, quiet, helpful and caring which are stereotypic feminized behaviors (Save the Children, Kenya, 2014). This stereotyped behavior by teachers in training institutions puts one gender in a better position to have confidence and to excel while neglecting the other. In drawing attention to gendered dimensions in teaching RE, it is imperative that teacher trainees recognize different needs and experiences of students thereby removing barriers to active participation of female students and strengthening systematic change by delivering equality of outcome during the learning-teaching processes. Teaching RE requires adopting a gender-neutral approach, which implies treating male and female students in the same way in the classroom environment. To achieve equality in knowledge acquisition in RE, it requires taking into account the differences in the needs, backgrounds, experiences, learning and relationship styles, and life circumstances of females and males (Daughters of St Paul, 2014).

METHODOLOGY

The methodology used in this study entirely depended on the coursework feedback, class participation of teacher trainees in Religious Education. It also involved holding a two-day orientation workshop for the target respondents. After the orientation workshop and a series of classroom lectures, a total of 156 undergraduate and 7 post-graduate teacher trainees were required to complete a questionnaire, while 25 students were randomly selected for interviews. A total of 188 students participated in the study. This section engaged student cohorts in critical expositions on RE pedagogical approach and gender practices. A case study approach was taken which included integration of lectures on gender practice in RE pedagogy. Students were also given a one-month project to identify gender practices in their classrooms, university and the community as they experienced them. Methods for data collection also included documentary analysis. The eight weeks' qualitative study was descriptive by design and data was analyzed using frequencies and percentages.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section is about the presentation and discussion of the findings. Findings from the study as a gender practice results indicated that the majority of students who offer

RE at the undergraduate level were 96 (60%) females compared to 59 (36%) males while at Postgraduate level the majority were 5 (72%) males compared to 2 (29%) females. Teacher trainees were asked through interviews why the majority of students who offered RE at the university were females. A female student who preferred anonymity narrated;

During the ordinary level, most of the students in this particular case, girls perform poorly in science and mathematics compared to boys, so our parents and teachers advise us to offer RE because it is not so demanding and one can pass it without going to class. Our parents also tell us that when you study RE, as a female you learn to be obedient and God-fearing. In the future, you also become a good mother and homemaker.

A similar study conducted by Tuyizere (2017) and Nabbuye (2018) found that the problem of gender stereotyped practices in academics lies in secondary schools where female students were discouraged from offering science subjects. Girls are still perceived as having low-efficacy to perform learning tasks in science subjects and most of them are encouraged to offer humanities compared to boys who offer sciences and mathematics. Teachers' perception of students' abilities influences their performance and choice of subject. In schools, female students are still subjected to gender practices that promote stereotypes and biases which limit their potential to venture into science subjects.

Gender Practices in RE pedagogy

This section examines gender practices that occur during the learning-teaching processes and in which the division of gender practices take place in and outside the classroom environment. A comprehensive response to gender equality includes integration of gender practices into teaching methods, curriculum and instructional materials in the learning environment. Negative gender practices are evidenced in school pedagogies and processes such as teaching, teacher-student interaction, school management, and infrastructure. Teaching and learning materials may contain gender stereotype teachers and teacher trainees are not always aware of. While institutional systems may not sufficiently address gender insensitive practices such as sexual harassment of female students, many institutions do not have private space especially for mothers pursuing higher education and many others.

Findings from the study indicated that 7% (12) of students identified RE teaching-learning environment as promoting gender irresponsible practices. While 5% (8) of students affirmed that gender practices that occur in class are exclusive and demoralizing. Furthermore, 9% (16) of students said that teachers of RE were discriminative in their pedagogical approaches. Whereas 6% (11) of students identified RE instructional materials to be sex-biased and stereotyped. Strangely in the 21st

century, 10% (17) of students were of the view that women continue to be taught in RE lessons as a weaker sex, have inferior status, are servants and subordinates of men, while men were praised as strong, leaders, and superior to females. Emphasis on gender roles as a cultural and religious constructions continue to play a discriminative role during RE lessons, while gender blind teaching, methodologies and content continue to take an up hand in RE pedagogy at all levels of schooling. Significantly, 5% (9) of students were of the view that gender role differentiation practices were God-given and could not be changed. It is being found out that teacher trainees uphold gender practices and teach them as natural and biologically determined. On the other hand, 9% (15) of students said that differentiation of masculinity and femininity traits enhanced gender stereotypes. A female student of RE who preferred anonymity shared her experience of a gendered negative practice with a female teacher trainer in higher education;

I had no housemaid at home so I opted to go for RE lectures with my baby. I sat at the back to avoid destructing my colleagues. No sooner had the female lecturer come in than she started abusing me in the presence of my colleagues for coming with a baby in class. She made it clear to me that she was not trained to teach mothers and their babies, therefore she advised me to leave the class. When I stood up to leave the class, the whole class followed me in protest against the female teacher because of the way she had treated me. She demanded an apology from the class for moving out of her lecture but the class refused to write her an apology letter, therefore, she refused to teach the same class.

The collective response of students to protest the female teachers' actions when their colleague was abused for coming with a baby to class was a gender sensitive action. This implies that males and females need to collaborate to address gender issues that may hinder learning. In a study that was carried out by a team of researchers in the United Kingdom on formations of gender practices and higher education pedagogies, students' responses indicated that teachers were biased and stereotyped in their teaching (UNESCO, 2015). There was a disjuncture between pedagogical intentions of academic staff and how students experienced these pedagogies. Teaching staff was found reluctant to develop gender inclusive pedagogies due to the fear of being reprimanded by the university authorities. Curriculum, instructional materials, and class environments were found to be gendered and unchallenged by the existing pedagogical practice. Related gender practices were identified in a study carried out in Korea where gender-segregated activities at school, meant that male students actively got involved in physical and dynamic activities. Male students more than females were actively involved in the lesson by asking and answering questions in class, participating in laboratory work and playing football during breaks. On

the other hand, female students were keen on more static activities and chatting with friends during break (UNESCO, 2015; UN, Women, 2018).

Integrating Gender Practices in RE pedagogy

Gender inclusion in university pedagogies is meant to prepare teacher trainees to develop socially sustainable pedagogical practices that build on gender equality and gender fairness in their pedagogical work with children they will teach (Kreitz-Sandberg, 2016). Integration of gender dimensions in the university pedagogy is important to prepare students who are gender responsive. It also inspires students to incorporate gender discourses into their pedagogical work in practical fields. Gender inclusion in university pedagogies promotes dimensions of realizing gender equality, gender-sensitive teaching and implementing policies to that effect (UN, 2015; Kreitz-Sandberg, 2016). An intersectional gender pedagogy focuses on differences, power, and inequality which the teacher trainer must expect to find in the classroom. Gender pedagogy examines the meaning of gender in a classroom environment. An intersectional gender pedagogy establishes the problems of gender differences, asks questions regarding gender differences, their effects on learning and the general set up of life (Lyke, 2015).

Furthermore, students were asked to identify what gender practices they wanted to be integrated in RE pedagogy. According to the results 9% (15) of students wanted the meaning of gender practices; 12% (19) of students identified rights of males and females as a crucial subject of study; 11% (18) of students identified managing behavior and relationships; 9% of students thought of instilling lifelong and social skills to respect people of the opposite sex; 13% (21) of students identified the responsibilities and roles of females and males; 9% (15) of students wanted the integration protection and raising awareness in RE pedagogy; 15% (24) of students identified the benefits of gender equality; 7% (12) of students were of the view that gender responsive teaching be incorporated in the RE pedagogy; 6% (11) of students identified gender stereotypes and 8% (14) of students mentioned discrimination and exclusion. In line with students' reports in table 3, UNESCO (2015) strongly recommends the integration of gender into different courses that form the curricula and pedagogical approaches. Kreitz-Sandberg (2016) points out that in Nordic countries, teachers and gender researchers have worked together to have a gender inclusion and gender-sensitive pedagogy in the university curriculum. Teacher educators in Finland have worked strategically with gender awareness in teacher education programmes to include gender practices in the teaching pedagogy. Gender inclusion integrates ideas of gender mainstreaming and gender sensitivity in university teaching.

Students' experiences after exposure to an integrated gender practice-RE Pedagogy

Students shared about their experiences after integrating gender practices in RE Pedagogy for a period of four months. After being inducted to intergraded –RE gender sensitive pedagogy; 17% (27) of students gained knowledge of the need for gender equality in all practices of life; 8% (13) of students experienced increased respect for the opposite sex; 10% (16) of students felt the need to share roles at all levels equitably; 4% (6) of students experienced enhanced knowledge on future healthy relationships; 8% (13) of students were ready to de-campaign gender stereotypes and discrimination; 17% of students were determined to raise awareness on equal sharing of resources and opportunities; 11% (19) of students experienced increased gender equality consciousness; 9% (15) felt increased knowledge on causes of women movements; 6% (9) of students supported gender responsive pedagogy and 10% (16) of students felt the need for creation of space for all sexes. Corroborative case studies conducted by FAWE (2016) indicate that teachers, teacher trainees, head teachers and students who were exposed to FAWE gender responsive pedagogical training changed their attitudes, practices and became more gender sensitive. There was a positive change in the gender dynamics in schools as the behavior and attitudes of girls and boys in the classroom became more gender responsive. The girls actively participated in classroom discussions and their confidence levels increased. After being inducted in gender-responsive pedagogy, teachers were shocked to learn how their negative language and attitudes affected students. Through the intensive training, teachers became more gender-aware and adopted practices that promoted equal participation of females and males in the school environment. Teachers stopped using abusive and threatening language. Consequently, students felt encouraged, interacted freely with teachers, the opposite sex and supported each other in assignments. Teachers' encouraging language and the new style of pedagogical approach in teaching raised learners' self-esteem and self-confidence, particularly for girls.

Gender education policies and RE pedagogy

Students were asked to mention whether there are policies that promote integration of gender practices in RE. According to results, 56% affirmed that policies exist but they are not implemented. Gender imbalance practices in the Ugandan community have drawn policy attention. Uganda is bound by commitments contained in various international, regional and national instruments that present gender equality in all spheres of life as a human right (UNESCO, 2015; Ministry of Education and Sports, 2016). In light of this, Makerere University is committed to the promotion of gender equality practices

where all students, academic, administrative and support staff, female and male enjoy equal opportunities, human rights and non-discrimination in all spheres of university life. This commitment is demonstrated by the institutionalization of affirmative action in the university's admission process. More so, the Makerere University Gender Equality Policy (MUGEP) is a vital tool for the integration of gender into units and structures, academic programmes and functions (Makerere University Gender Policy, 2006 & 2009). Gender equality policy signals the position of the university on gender practices/issues as part of its vision, mission and core business. This policy prepares the teaching staff to respond to issues of pedagogy as they arise in the academic space. Significantly, gender equality is central to SDGs, therefore, there is the need to eliminate all pedagogical and structural impediments that stand in the way of full female participation in higher education. Gender equality is a benchmark for institutional advancement and has become the basis by which the quality and effectiveness of an institution is judged (Walter, 2012; Makerere University, 2018).

Despite the government push to implement gender-sensitive pedagogies, evidence suggests that it has not yet been successful in getting teachers and school administrators to adopt their use in classroom environment. The national education policies that support the use of gender-sensitive pedagogy have not translated into practice at the classroom level. Gender-sensitive pedagogy has not yet been fully defined in policy framework and guidelines. The majority of teacher trainees and teachers have not used gender-sensitive strategies in their pedagogies or classroom environment because they are still gender blind. Gender education policies, teacher trainees and teachers play an important role in challenging gender stereotypes that can liberate students from gender-blind situations (UNESCO, 2011; Daughters of St Paul, 2014; Nabbuye, 2018).

Challenges of integrating gender practices in RE pedagogy

Students were asked their opinions on the challenges of integrating gender practices in RE pedagogy. Among the challenges identified by students of integrating gender practices in RE pedagogy was patriarchy as identified by 15% (24); gender irresponsible-teaching environment as viewed //by 8%; conservative behaviors of the teaching staff and students (12% (20); teachers' failure to understand gender concerns in their environment as identified by 7% (11), lack of monitoring mechanisms of the RE pedagogy as identified by 10% (17); females oppress their fellow females as identified by 6% (10); institution condones to negative gender practices 13% (22); abuse of power and relations as identified by 12% (19); stakeholders' failure to implement policies as identified by 10% (15) and gender blind instructional materials

and content as identified by 8% (12).

Corroboratively, Walter (2012), Ahunna Eziakonwa-Onochie (2013), FAWE (2016) and Nakityo (2018), acknowledge that teaching materials in most institutions of learning are not scrutinized for gender stereotypes. Many textbooks and instructional materials reinforce attitudes, practices, and beliefs that males are superior to females. More so, most teacher trainees and teachers tend to be authoritarian, hostile, and unapproachable and distant. This makes it difficult for students, mostly females, to seek guidance and assistance from their teachers for either academic or personal problems. In line with this, a study conducted in Swaziland (Krakowski, 2014; Mutendwahothe & Shongwe, 2010) found that teacher education institutions' curriculum continues to reproduce the dominant patriarchal cultural practices. Curriculum texts and course outlines depicted masculine narratives and discourses of male knowledge and superiority. There was a gap between theory and practice concerning gender responsiveness by teacher trainees, teachers and other stakeholders in education.

What actions should be taken to integrate gender practices in other pedagogical subjects?

Students were asked their opinions on what actions to be taken to integrate gender practices in RE pedagogy; 15% (24) recommended raising voices against gender stereotyped pedagogies; 9% (14) pointed out resisting patriarchal hierarchy and stereotyped roles in teaching RE; 8% (13) suggested increasing classroom activities that enhanced individual readiness to from gender stereotyped state. 7% (11) said that translating gender theories and ideas into positive gender practices in RE pedagogy. These approaches can bring about gender equality practices and application of transformative RE allegations raised in the pedagogy; 14% (23) were of the view that RE teachers make use of teaching practices in RE that unlock female potentials, expand their horizons and adopt change; 5% (9) suggested enhancement of problem based teaching that facilitated gender practices; 10% (15) advocated for lifelong integrated gender practice in RE pedagogy; 11% discouraged gender insensitive RE pedagogy; 3% (4) suggested strengthening of good gender practices in RE pedagogy and 6% (10) challenged teachers to apply methods facilitate equal sharing of traditional gender roles among males and females. Against this backdrop, and in line with the Ministry of Education and Sports (2016), Gender in Education Sector Policy actions that need to be taken include;

- (i) Promote an enabling protective and gender responsive learning environment for all persons by 2030;
- (ii) Review the teacher trainees' pedagogy, curriculum and incorporate gender sensitive practices in its delivery;

(iii) Achieve gender responsive teaching and learning instructional materials for primary, secondary and tertiary education by 2030;

(iv) Increasing female participation in the review and development of gender-responsive teaching and learning instructional materials.

Addressing the existing gender gaps calls for new strategic intervention programmes and plans as well as setting new performance indicators. More so, Sustainable Development Goal 4 aims at ensuring inclusive and equitable education and promotes lifelong opportunities. On the other hand, Goal 5 aims at achieving gender equality and empowers girls and women (Ministry of Gender, Labor and Social Development; 2016). These SDGs commitments provide strong grounds for the integration of gender practices in RE pedagogy.

CONCLUSION

Conclusively, integrating gender practices in RE pedagogy calls for teachers to take an all-encompassing gender approaches during the process of lesson planning, classroom management, performance and evaluation. RE pedagogy can be used by teacher trainees to shape learners' actions and judgments, in the exposition of gender practice. The power the teacher holds over students can be used as an empowering strategy to engage students into dialogue with gender practices and breaking the gender biased and stereotyped tendencies in pedagogy. RE curriculum of the 21st century takes into consideration; an integrated gender-pedagogy, surrounding culture in the students' lives; life expectations where the students live; methods used by teachers; the school and community environment; teachers' beliefs and values and the changing times. Understanding the nature of RE pedagogy is a necessary prerequisite to understanding what role teacher trainees' need to play to support students in their gender sensitive practices. Given the key role, RE plays in shaping the cultural and social attitudes and meeting the SDGs' target of 2030, therefore, integrating gender practice in RE pedagogy may be a powerful tool that promotes gender equality practices, thus, addressing stereotypes and bias among male and female students.

RECOMMENDATION

This study recommends the following;

- (i) International and Governments institutions to promote the integration of gender practices in pedagogy in all courses of teacher trainees' in higher education;
- (ii) Teacher trainees to promote and implement the integration of gender practices in their pedagogical approaches.
- (iii) Train RE teaching staff in gender-sensitive pedagogies in higher education;

- (iv) Students and Staff to reflect on their own application of gender practices and their implication for equality.
- (v) Conduct further research into areas that break virgin fields in gender practices

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