

ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT SYSTEMS ON GENDER RESPONSIVE PEDAGOGY IN PUBLIC SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN MERU DISTRICT COUNCIL, ARUSHA-TANZANIA

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the administrative support systems in promoting gender responsive pedagogy in public secondary schools in Meru District Council. The study utilized transformational leadership theory. The study used qualitative research approach and a case study design with a sample size of 34 (16 school administrators and 16 teachers) from a target population of 1,241 teachers via purposive and stratified sampling. The researcher used questionnaire, interview, and document analysis as tools for data collection. The researcher analysed quantitative data descriptively and qualitative data were analysed thematically. The study revealed that there were various support systems adopted by the school administrators to enhance gender responsive pedagogy such as resource allocation, capacity building and stakeholder involvement in Meru District Council regardless of the challenges encountered. The study concludes that school administrators play a vital role in promoting gender responsive pedagogy as they are responsible to supervise the overall activities and performance in a school. The study recommends that there should be continuous capacity building to the school administrators on gender responsive pedagogy so they can properly concentrate on equality in provision of education to ensure both boys and girls achieve their goals and enjoy their right to education as emphasized in SDG4.

Keywords: Administrative support systems, Gender Responsive Pedagogy, Public Secondary Schools

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The gender inequality is a common and long-standing phenomenon in most of societies worldwide that persists in all spheres of life including provision of education that has a negative impact on the equal development of male and female students (Yang, 2024). Factors such as religious beliefs, traditional beliefs, norms and customs of the society influence the persistence of gender discrimination; thus, it is socially constructed (Maro & Omer, 2024). The existence of these inequalities in provision of education emerged the idea of gender responsive pedagogy which is the cornerstone for achieving equality in provision of education. Gender responsive pedagogy trains a teacher to inspire hope and instill a love of learning in both female and male students. It is a process that requires the action and commitment of all stakeholders, including teachers, parents, and students both girls and boys. Thus, school management has overarching role to play to ensure enough support systems on gender responsive pedagogy and eliminate gender inequality in provision of education.

Gender inequality increases dropout rates at primary and secondary levels, particularly of girls in many countries as well as boys in some countries (Unterhalter, 2019). This gender bias in education is one of the biggest reasons why girls have less access to schooling (Singh, 2022). These limitations, makes girls denied from access to essential skills, knowledge, and future opportunities. Hence, there is a need to eliminating gender disparity in education to create a balanced society where every child can grow, learn, and achieve without limitations set by gender (Hoque & Mahanta, 2020).

In Europe gender inequality exist too, particularly in STEM fields which are much dominated by males. European education seeks to eliminate gender disparities by providing equal education opportunities and bolster women's participation in male dominated fields (Kanta et al., 2025). On the other hand, in EU at the tertiary level, gender gaps favour females, as there is a need for more attention to be given to boys to ensure that they profit equally from educational opportunities in Europe. This should consider both enrolments and educational outcomes (Klasen & Minasyan, 2017).

In Brazil gender parity has been achieved in quantitative indicators of access to basic and higher education, but qualitative inequalities related to gender stereotypes, occupational segregation, symbolic violence, and barriers to women's full participation in traditionally masculinized fields still persist (Maracaja et al., 2026). Gender stigma may still be surrounded by conservative conceptions, hence the need for developing awareness on gender responsive pedagogy (Fortunato & Dias, 2018).

In Latin America, social phenomenon encourages discrimination of people because of their gender especially in the role of women. This has been discouraged through established several laws, regulations, and public policies. Still, the expected progress towards gender equity has not yet been achieved. While tuition fees for secondary school have been eliminated in most Sub-Saharan Africa countries, households still face substantial direct and opportunity costs when sending their children to school. Some rural areas often do not have a secondary school in their village; hence it is expensive for girls in terms of distances each day and safety concerns (Marcus, 2024).

In Tanzania various education policies and reforms emphasize equality in education like fee-free secondary education policy, as this increased enrolment rate. However, many children still face barriers to access education due to geographical challenges, limiting school availability in remote areas, poverty, restricting students' ability to afford indirect school-related costs, and cultural factors, which often prioritise boys' education over girls' education (MOEST, 2025a). This has influence on student's participation and achievement. School administrators play a greater role in translating policies into practice through supervising teaching and learning activities, enforcing policies and supporting capacity building and shaping school culture. Their leadership is essential in establishing administrative measures that challenge gender stereotypes, ensure availability of gender responsive spaces such as safe sanitation facilities and supportive school environments, and create support systems that encourage teachers to implement gender responsive pedagogy (MOEST, 2025a). However, challenges such as limited resources, human capacity constraints, and gaps in coordination continue to affect implementation of gender responsive pedagogy (MOEST,2025a; Al-Samarrai & Tamagnam, 2019).

In Meru District Council, the study by Lauwo and Mkulu (2021) indicates that, early pregnancies affect girl's attendance. Also, male students tend to dropout of school after being circumcised and engage in small business hence affect their academic performance. Additionally, there is a lack of community involvement on academic issues of their children as a result of poor school leadership. The dropout rate of male students is higher than girls where 167 boys and 139 girls dropped out of school by 2025, (MOEST, 2025b). Most studies have explored other gender issues, but there are limited studies which have specifically explored on how school administrators promote gender responsive pedagogy in public secondary schools in Meru District Council. Therefore, this study sought to examine the administrative support systems that promote gender responsive pedagogy in public secondary schools in Meru District Council so as to ensure all children enjoy their right to education and achieve their goals.

2.0 METHODOLOGY

2.1 Research Approach and Design

The study used qualitative research approach. Qualitative research is a type of research that aims to gather and analyse non-numerical (descriptive) data in order to gain an understanding of individuals' social reality, including understanding their attitudes and beliefs (Khanday & Khanam, 2023). This approach helps to obtain enough information which bring in depth understanding on the administrative measures against gender stereotypes in public secondary schools in Meru District Council. The study used a case study design to study the site precisely and obtain deep explorations in the selected four sample schools in Meru District Council.

2.2 Study Area, Population and Sampling

The study took place in public secondary schools in Meru District Council, where school administrators and teachers were involved. A sample of 32 participants were sampled from 1,241 population and involved in a study for in-depth data collection and understanding of the phenomenon. To obtain relevant participants, Homogenous purposive sampling was used to select 16 school administrators (heads of schools, deputy heads of schools, academic masters/mistresses and discipline master/ mistresses) based on their roles and experience, and stratified sampling was used to select 16 teachers basing on gender, so as to ensure perspectives from both males and females are included in the study.

2.3 Data Collection Tools, Analysis and Trustworthiness of the Study

The study used questionnaire, semi-structured interview guide and documentary review guide to obtain both quantitative and qualitative information related to the study objective. Quantitative data were analysed descriptively using SPSS Version 23 to obtain the mean, while qualitative data were analysed thematically to identify emerging themes. Credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability were considered to ensure trustworthiness of the study and quality of the findings (Stahil & King, 2020; Ahmed, 2024).

2.4 Research Ethics

Ethical considerations were adhered where, the researcher obtained introduction letter from TUMA Research Ethics Committee, and permission to conduct the study was provided by the

District Executive Director (DED) to access the selected public secondary schools. Participants were informed on the purpose of the study and their rights and thereafter informed consent was provided. No participant was compelled to take part, while confidentiality and anonymity were observed throughout the study. Participants were informed of their right to withdraw at any stage without any repercussions. Compliance with these ethical standards contributed to the trustworthiness and quality of the research findings (Creswell & Creswell, 2023).

3.0 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The are organized basing on the research objectives, where qualitative approach was used. The section starts with the participants background information, followed by data analysis on administrative support systems on gender responsive pedagogy.

3.1 Background characteristics of participants

The background characteristics of participants involved in this study include gender, education qualifications as well as working experience in years, as shown in the table 1.

Table 4.1: Background Characteristics of Participants

Demographic Category	Interval	Frequency	Percentages (%)
Gender	Male	19	60
	Female	13	40
	Total	32	100
Education Qualification	Diploma	6	19
	Degree	24	75
	Master	2	6
	Total	32	100
Working Experience	Less than 1 year	1	3
	1-5 years	2	6
	6-10 years	17	53
	11 years and above	12	38
	Total	32	100

Source: (Field Data, 2026)

The findings in table 1 indicate that the researcher used a total 32 participants where by in term of gender majority were males (60%) and minority were females (40%). This indicate that most of teachers are males, may be this is due to the geographical location of the studied schools. Two schools involved in the study were found in remote areas where teachers tend to relocate weekly from Monday to Friday where they had to go back to their families, as this is somehow difficult to be adapted by female teachers because they are responsible to take care of their families. Also, in the category of education qualifications, (19%) of the participants were holding a diploma, (75%) were holding a bachelor's degree and (6%) were holding a master

degree. This means that majority of secondary schools' teachers are skilled due to their high level of education they possess.

Further, the data demonstrate that (3%) of the participants had less than 1 year of working experience, (6%) had 1-5 years of working experience, (53%) had 6-10 years of working experience and (38%) had 11 years and above of the working experience. This indicates that most of participants involved in the study were highly experience teachers who can differentiate the previous mode which was gender blind pedagogy and gender responsive pedagogy.

Generally, described demographic information of the participants involved in this study in terms of gender, education qualifications, working experience in terms of years as well as the instruments returned rate enrich trustworthiness of the studied phenomenon.

3.2 Support Systems on Gender Responsive Pedagogy

Regarding administrative support systems the researcher revealed various support systems that were adopted by the school administrators to enhance gender responsive pedagogy in public secondary schools. School administrators are responsible to monitor and supervise the overall activities in the school including the available resources such as fund allocated, infrastructures as well as human resource. The researcher used questionnaires to obtain data from teachers, and the results were tabulated and presented in the table 2

Table 2: Administrative Support Systems on Gender Responsive Pedagogy

Item statements	Responses									Mean
	Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Agree		Strongly Agree			
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%		
Involvement of different stakeholders	1	6	2	12	11	69	2	13	2.87	
Supervising Responsively the Allocated Resources	1	6	4	25	9	56	2	13	2.75	
Capacity Building	1	6	5	31	7	44	3	19	2.7	
Arranging Regular Guidance and Counselling Schedule	2	12	4	25	9	56	1	6	2.56	
Overall mean									2.72	

Source: (Field Data, 2026)

Table 2 shows data related with the support systems that were adopted by the school administrators in enhancing gender responsive pedagogy in public secondary school. The overall mean of 2.72 indicates that the participants agreed that there are various support systems adopted by the school administrators in enhancing gender responsive pedagogy in their schools.

Moreover, the researcher used interview guide to obtain data on different perspectives from the school administrators where participants were required to describe on various support systems

adopted to enhance gender responsive pedagogy in their schools, and the following support systems were disclosed;

3.2.1 Supervising Responsively the Allocated Resources

The school administrators have a responsibility to monitor and supervise the available resources at the school including human resources, infrastructures as well as fund. Data in table 2 shows that 56% of respondents agreed on the presence of enough resources that support gender responsive pedagogy in their schools. This revealed that, school administrators ensure gender responsive allocation of the available resources in their schools. Again, school administrators delegate power and distribute responsibilities to the teachers, including appointing the heads of departments such as discipline and guidance and counselling, committee as reported:

Financial resources allocated is not enough 100% for supporting gender responsive pedagogy, but we trying at our level best to ensure gender responsiveness. Sometimes teachers use their own fund to support students where needed like those who are denied their needs because of their gender identity so as to meet their objectives. (Interview with the Head of School 4, 10th March 2026)

Another head of school from school A, argued that;

Apart from financial resource, infrastructures are important in performing any activity. In promoting gender responsive pedagogy there should be variety of needed infrastructure like buildings such as hostels, I have tried at my level best to ensure that we have the boy's dormitory because before we had two girl's dormitories and there was no boy's dormitory, so we were not able to accommodate boys for boarding even if they experience challenges at home, like distance from home. But for now, we boy's dormitory too where boys can be accommodated where needed. (Interview with Head of School A, 18th March 2026)

Again, teaching and learning materials are necessary to accomplish gender responsive pedagogy. The deputy head of school C also argued that;

Most of teaching and learning materials are provided by the ministry concerned and they are not gender sensitive. Some books with stories like English and Kiswahili show gender discrimination in their content by placing men in strong positions and women in weak positions as this still continue to impart negative attitude to the students and even teachers can not think about being gender sensitive unless they are reminded through regular in-service training. (Interview with Deputy Head of School C, 25th March 2026)

Further, another participant from school C added that; "Although the teaching and learning materials supplied by the ministry are not gender sensitive, we are trying to encourage teachers to improvise the materials that can be gender sensitive" (interview with Academic Master School C, 25th March, 2026).

This shows that, in order to achieve gender responsive pedagogy, there is a need to have gender responsive teaching and learning materials so that teachers can easily assist both boys and girls and implement gender responsive pedagogy.

3.2.2 Capacity Building

Most teachers lack awareness of gender responsive pedagogy, so training is needed. This includes methodology on how to apply gender responsive pedagogy as well assisting both boys and girls while considering their psychological needs. Table 2 shows that, 44% of participants agreed with the provision of training on gender responsive pedagogy. This revealed that teachers are provided with awareness on gender responsive pedagogy, though, still there were more than a half of them lack awareness on gender responsive pedagogy. Again, one head of school reported that;

In our school there is a program where teachers attend different seminars conducted by DSW and among of the content taught is gender issues like different methodologies on how to be gender sensitive in teaching and learning activities. Through MEWAKA other teachers are learning from those who attended the seminar. (Interview with the Head of School D, 10th March 2026)

Further, deputy head of school A added that;

We are learning different gender issues through PITA project, on my side PITA project has helped me a lot on different teaching methodologies including gender responsive pedagogy, and I do apply them always when I am teaching. Although some teachers they just enjoy attending the seminar, without taking into considerations the learned content. (Interview with Deputy Head of School A, 18th March 2026)

On the other hand, the researcher discovered one school that is school B where there is no any training provided on gender responsive pedagogy. The deputy head of school B reported that;

We as teachers we are using our own knowledge we have learned from the colleges to deal with different gender issues we are meeting at work, but we are not receiving any training on gender issue, so even our awareness on gender responsive pedagogy is very minimal, we are just trying to serve them according to our understanding. (Interview with Deputy Head of School B, 25th March 2026).

Additionally, one head of school from school A argued that; “We trying at least to promote gender responsive pedagogy, but this gender responsive pedagogy is in Europe and not in our countries” (Interview with the Head of School A, 18th March 2026). This shows that, though gender responsive pedagogy seems to be very important, but still not all teachers are aware on it, there are some teachers who lack awareness on gender responsive pedagogy hence its implementation can be difficult.

3.2.3 Involvement of different stakeholders

Involvement is necessary as among of the ways to be utilized by the school administrators to promote gender responsive pedagogy. Parents and guardians are involved as they have a part

to play in promoting gender responsive pedagogy, parents and guardians have the responsibilities of supplying basic needs basing on gender needs so as to make all students comfortable in their studies as they deserve the same. Data in table 2 revealed that, participants responded agreed by 69% on different stakeholder involvement to share and discuss students' issues including fulfilling the students' needs as well as assisting them basing on their gender so as to create a conducive environment that support gender responsive pedagogy. Further, through interview one respondent reported that;

There are some parents who still believe that girls are not supposed to get education rather than performing household activities, hence they are denied to attend the school and those who have got a chance to go they are not fulfilled with their basic needs. Thus, there is a need to involve parents and we are doing so in order to educate them so as they can create positive learning environment for all children regardless of their gender identity. (Interview with Deputy Head of School D, 27th March 2026).

Another academic master from school B argued that;

On the other hands, most of boys now adays are losing hope for studies and engaging in different commercial activities such as bodaboda which affect their studies and even increasing their rate of dropout, hence they can not achieve their intended goals, thus there is a need to involve different stakeholders including parents. (Interview with Academic Master B, 25th March 2026).

Apart from parents, some chronic gender cases were reported to the concerned authority as reported; "Once we experience a certain chronic case like chronic truancy, pregnancy for girls, other authorities like WEO or WEO are informed too" (Interview with Discipline Master School B, 24th March 2026). This revealed that, different stakeholders were involved in promoting gender responsive pedagogy. This indicated that, the school administrators work together with other community organisations to so as to promote gender responsive education in their schools. Although, through document analysis the researcher reviewed different documents like parents meeting minutes and staff meeting minutes which revealed that gender responsiveness issues were not an agenda rather they were just discussed as an additional/AOB in their meetings.

3.2.4 Arranging Regular Guidance and Counselling Schedule

Guidance and counselling are very important to build individuals psychologically. Basing on movements towards gender responsive pedagogy, people need to be prepared psychologically so they can easily adapt it, as still it seems to be something new in most of peoples' mind as revealed in table 2 that majority of respondents agreed by 56%. One academic master from school A reported that;

In our school we are providing regular guidance and counselling to the students and it is scheduled in the school calendar; this is done through the class meeting and gender-based meeting which are conducted four times a year. Also, when it happens an individual student experience a certain challenge and needs counselling he/she may meet the concerned teachers in the office for the service. Though for now we have no

guidance and counselling office, but the discipline office is used where needed. (Interview with Academic Master School A, 17th March 2026)

Further, Academic Master of school A, added; "To transform peoples' mind need time, so guidance and counselling is needed so as to make students understood, accept and adopt gender responsive pedagogy" (Interview with Academic Master School A, 17th March 2026). This revealed that, students need to be prepared psychologically so as to make them ready to adopt gender responsive pedagogy.

On the other hand, discipline master reported that;

Guidance and counselling service is provided to the students, although there is no office, it is somehow difficult because a teacher has to find a place for privacy such as moving with a student to a playground to keep distance from the others so as to make the student comfortable to express him/herself. Even discipline cases are conducted outside the physics laboratory corridor which is not a conducive place (Interview with Discipline Master School B, 24th March 2026).

This revealed that, sometimes students can lack guidance and counselling service simply because of absence of proper place to express their challenges.

4.0 DISCUSSIONS

4.1 Supervising Responsively the Allocated Resources

The current findings revealed that school administrators ensure equality in provision of resources for enhancing quality education to all students through construction of both male and female dormitories. Also, students without basic learning facilities are supported by teachers and get motivated towards learning. These findings are inline with VVOB (2025) suggesting that the school administration has a vital role to play in ensuring the school environment nurtures a gender responsive pedagogy. The school administrators are responsible to provides teaching and learning materials that are gender responsive through modification of the allocated teaching and learning materials or by encouraging improvisation. Also, Ebuk and Osaikuwuominan (2019) suggest that leaders have to use coaching supervisory style which involves a lot of coaching and mentoring which contribute to long-term professional development of teachers. Teachers are guided on ways to apply some gender stereotyped-curriculum materials in classroom instruction in such a way that both male and female students are made to feel important and treated equally.

4.2 Capacity Building

The current findings revealed that teachers are provided with training based on how to implement gender issues in classroom for facilitation of equality in learning practices which are done through various planned programs including MEWAKA and PITA project. The current findings are inline with Osuju and Kalio (2018) who revealed that school administrators have to set direction on what to do so as to achieve gender responsive pedagogy. This includes, motivational strategies, developing awareness to improve classroom practices and ensuring gender sensitive teaching is sensitized or encouraged to facilitate both males and female

students, ability to learn and progress equally. Also, VVOB (2025) reported that school administration should re-trains teachers on gender responsive pedagogy as well as formulating, apply and monitor rules and regulations that will transform the school into a gender responsive environment. Further, The Transformational leadership theory encourages in-service training Díaz-Sáenz (2011), thus, school administrators should raise awareness through training and inspire others by being gender sensitive for maintaining gender equity when performing their responsibilities.

4.3 Involvement of different stakeholders

The findings of the study revealed that parents are involved for making decision in behaviour management issues for making functional decision on gender-based issues as well as provision of teaching and learning materials equal for both genders which facilitate sense being valued making them interested in learning. The findings are supported by Tejada (2025) insisting that school administrators have to adopt inclusive leadership as a catalyst for gender-responsive pedagogy. Leaders who prioritize equity and participatory governance foster environments where gender-sensitive practices can thrive. This aligns with Transformational Leadership Theory which insist that leaders have to engage with their followers and raise one another to higher level of motivation and morality Díaz-Sáenz (2011). The school administrators are supposed to apply transformational leadership by raising awareness and consciousness to the subordinates, students as well as the community in general on the significance of gender responsive pedagogy, doing so makes subordinates change their values, beliefs and attitudes and perform their duties and responsibilities comfortably while focusing on the organisational goals and objectives.

4.4 Arranging Regular Guidance and Counselling Schedule

The current findings revealed that in schools, teachers provide guidance and counselling services though gender-based meeting and classroom meeting as scheduled in the school calenda. The findings align with Kanga (2017) who reported that guidance and counselling help students overcome stereotype pressure, encourage students both boys and girls to choose subjects and careers based on interest and ability not gender norms and build confidence and self esteem. Guidance and counselling equip children and young people with knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values that will empower them to realize their health, social and sexual relationships and instil positive attitudes towards themselves and others, and how to cope with different situations. Further, Arumugam et al., (2021) revealed that guidance and counselling help students to become psychologically mature and realize their potentials.

5.0 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

5.1 Conclusion

The study concludes that administrative support systems are vital for enhancing gender responsive pedagogy so as to ensure both boys and girls enjoy their right to education. The study revealed that various support systems like guidance and counselling, involving different stakeholders, capacity building as well as resource allocation were adopted to enhance gender responsive pedagogy. However, there is a need for continuous awareness campaign on gender

responsive pedagogy to influence its implementation and ensure equality in provision of education

5.2 Recommendations

The study recommends the following

1. There should be continuous in-service training on gender responsive pedagogy through seminars and workshops so as to build capacity to the teachers on gender responsive pedagogy and ensure both boys and girls enjoy their right to education.
2. School administrators have to ensure that different stakeholders such as parents, students, teachers as well as religious leaders are involved on gender responsive pedagogy. Religious leaders can be good ambassadors to develop awareness to the parents and the society in general on gender responsive pedagogy.
3. Further Studies should be carried on the same topic but different geographical areas and addressing other aspects of gender responsive pedagogy.

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