



Gender-responsive teaching improves learning outcomes for both women and men

LEARNING BRIEF

Transforming Employability for Social Change in East Africa (TESCEA)



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Integrating gender-responsive approaches into higher education improves learning outcomes for both women and men students

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Cover image: A lecture in University of Dodoma

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Executive summary

To reduce the gender gap in higher education in Africa, it is imperative that both women and men find their higher education environment to be a safe, open and conducive space to learn and to flourish. The Transforming Employability for Social Change in East Africa (TESCEA) partnership (2018-2021) aimed to transform teaching and learning in university environments so that both male and female students graduate with critical thinking and problem-solving skills, and with the desire to use their skills and ideas to tackle their country's social and economic problems.

Gender-responsive pedagogy was integrated into the fabric of the TESCEA pedagogical approach, to address the gender gap in the classroom and in wider campus learning activities. The project established a Gender Working Group and took a gender lens to key teaching and learning spaces as part of the process of redesigning courses and transforming higher education teaching and learning.

The project gave insight into the following key points related to gender:

- **Integrating a gender-responsive pedagogy tackles gender inequalities in teaching and learning for both academic staff and students**
A focus on gender-responsive pedagogy ensures increased participation and interaction benefits both female and male students, with a particularly noticeable impact for female students. Gender-responsive pedagogy contributes to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.
- **There are entry points and 'quick wins' for tackling gender gaps in teaching and learning that are immediately visible**
Although undertaking a curriculum redesign process can be intense and long-term, some aspects of gender-responsive pedagogy are immediately applied and immediately impactful. This includes the use of language and how academic staff manage their classrooms.
- **Gender-responsive pedagogy supports transformative learning because it focuses on meeting all students where they are**
Gender-responsive pedagogy supports transformative learning by helping students to become aware of assumptions related to gender; helping to ensure that teaching and learning materials are reflective of the real-life experiences of both female and male students; and ensuring that both female and male students are able to fully participate in discourse and group work.
- **Creating lasting change in institutions, and in teaching and learning, is about more than just gender mainstreaming**
Supporting and training academic staff to incorporate a gender-responsive lens to their teaching provides a unique entry point for addressing organisational inequalities; the small changes they make in teaching, and the impact on students, gradually build momentum for wider change.
- **Lasting change requires support, commitment and time**
Through the TESCEA project we identified some key elements that enable successful and lasting change in addressing higher education gender imbalances:
 - o Identifying and amplifying Gender Champions is integral to creating lasting change
 - o Changing opinions on gender takes time and is incremental. Building lasting change is about more than just changing the curriculum
 - o Leadership buy-in continues to be important
 - o Space needs to be created to tackle gender inequalities
- **Linking teaching and learning to the world of employment can contribute to tackling gender inequities beyond university**
There are some promising indications that our focus on gender-responsive pedagogy will have an impact not only while students are at university, but also when they enter the workplace. When students graduate, they can bring what they have learned about being gender-responsive into their professions. And employers who have been engaged in TESCEA are starting to recognise the importance of addressing gender imbalances within their industries.

As a result of the gender-responsive pedagogy work in TESCEA and evaluation of the project, we have the following recommendations:

- **Gender-responsive pedagogy should be incorporated into any pedagogical reform initiatives** to ensure that the needs of female and male students are met and that they will benefit equally from improved teaching and learning practices.
- Institutional gender mainstreaming in a higher education environment should always ensure **it addresses teaching and learning so that both academic staff and students evolve their attitudes, biases and perceptions of gender in society**. Mainstreaming of policies and practices on their own will not change attitudes and beliefs unless the teaching environment and materials are also addressed.
- **Long-lasting change is about tackling change at multiple levels:** Addressing gender in teaching and learning is not only about the process of training academic staff to implement and understand a new approach. It is also about creating an institutional environment that enables long-lasting change. Institutional gender champions, student awareness, leadership buy-in and broader gender sensitisation all support a sustainable approach.
- Building gender awareness needs space to breathe. Changing people's perceptions and beliefs does not happen overnight, and usually happens incrementally over long periods of time. **Ensuring space and openness to dialogue is key.**

1 Introduction and background

It is clear that a gender gap in higher education exists across Africa. Fewer women than men enrol, and even fewer women graduate or proceed to move onto postgraduate education.¹ And yet, we know that everyone benefits with every year of higher education attained, with individual earnings increasing by 7% and with benefits spreading to women's health, child health, longevity, and happiness.² And, when women participate in the skilled labour force at the same rate as men, it is good for the economy, increasing GDP.³ Yet, we know that university environments often reproduce societal gender gaps so unless universities address their gender gaps, these benefits may remain unrealised.

To start to redress these imbalances, it is imperative that both women and men find their higher education environment to be a safe, open and conducive space to learn and to flourish. In 2018, INASP worked in partnership across East Africa to launch an ambitious project called Transforming Employability for Social Change in East Africa (TESCEA, see box). The aim was to transform teaching and learning in university environments so that both female and male students graduate with critical thinking and problem-solving skills, and with the desire to use their skills and ideas to tackle their country's social and economic problems.

In TESCEA, we developed a gender-responsive pedagogy (or gender-responsive teaching and learning approach) to be integrated into the fabric of the new pedagogical approach, in order to address the gender gap in the classroom and in wider campus learning activities. This approach was intended to transform how academic staff address their students, listen to their students, and design their class and activities to support all students to thrive.

In designing the gender-responsive teaching and learning approach, we found that a significant amount of the previous work and research on how to do this focused on the European context, and therefore did not represent the lived experiences of East African teaching staff and their students. The other mass of research in the subject focused on secondary education. This did not fully represent the experiences of female and male higher education students, who, as adults, have the ability to own and shape their university experience with a level of independence that is not present in secondary school.

Recognising these gaps, our partnership developed an approach that was both geared to adult learners and that reflected the East African higher education environment. At the same time, we aimed to ensure the focus was placed on both women and men, with the new learning experience aimed at cultivating all learners to become fully gender-aware and gender-responsive individuals who will ultimately become professionals who challenge gender gaps they see in the world of employment.

TRANSFORMING EMPLOYABILITY FOR SOCIAL CHANGE IN EAST AFRICA

Transforming Employability for Social Change in East Africa (TESCEA) helped young people in Tanzania and Uganda to use their skills and ideas to tackle social and economic problems. With partners in Tanzania, Uganda and Kenya, TESCEA supported universities, industries, communities and government to work together to create an improved learning experience for students – both women and men. This improved learning experience fostered the development of critical thinking and problem-solving skills, and allowed for practical learning beyond the classroom that improves a graduate's employability.

The TESCEA partnership was led by INASP (UK), working with Mzumbe University (Tanzania), University of Dodoma (Tanzania), Gulu University (Uganda), Uganda Martyrs University (Uganda), Association for Faculty Enrichment in Learning and Teaching (Kenya) and Ashoka East Africa (Kenya).

¹ World Economic Forum, (2021). Global Gender Gap Report 2021. <https://www.weforum.org/reports/ab6795a1-960c-42b2-b3d5-587eccda6023>

² Oketch, M. Financing higher education in sub-Saharan Africa: some reflections and implications for sustainable development. High Educ 72, 525–539 (2016). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10734-016-0044-6>

³ Woldemichael, A. (2020). Closing the gender gap in African labor markets is good economics. Brookings. <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/africa-in-focus/2020/01/23/closing-the-gender-gap-in-african-labor-markets-is-good-economics/>

2 Gender-responsive pedagogy: our approach

Gender-responsive pedagogy was integrated into the fabric of the TESCEA project through one of the main project outcomes: to create 'a transformative teaching and learning environment which is critical thinking, problem-solving and gender responsive for faculty and students'. We established a Gender Working Group comprised of women and men from all seven project partners to ensure that gender was considered throughout the project activities more generally and to also specifically agree the scope of the project's approach to gender-responsive pedagogy.

The Gender Working Group defined gender-responsive pedagogy within the TESCEA project as having two components:

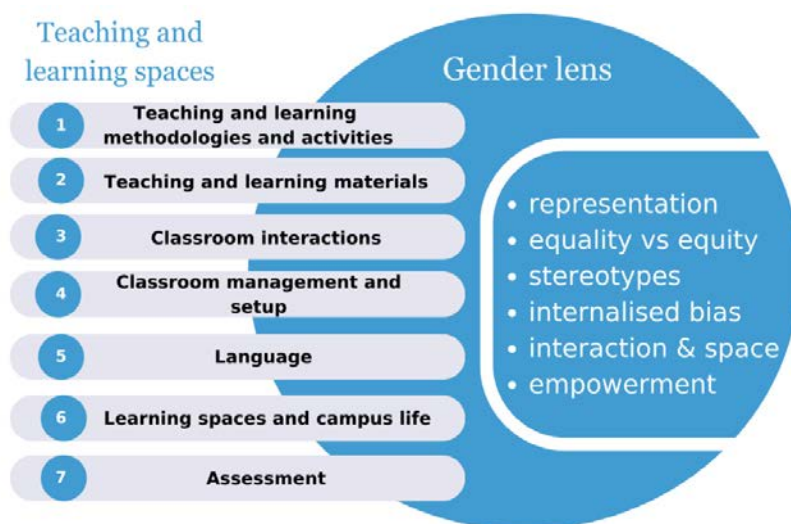
- 1) The learning needs of male and female learners are addressed in teaching and learning processes (inside and outside of the classroom).
- 2) Teaching staff are gender-aware and gender-responsive in their planning and facilitation of courses, and continuously reflecting and adapting.

Building on this definition, the TESCEA approach to gender-responsive pedagogy aimed to foster overall gender awareness while also supporting academic staff to integrate principles of gender equity across the different components of their teaching and learning practice.

At the core of creating a transformative teaching and learning environment was the TESCEA course redesign process. Through hands-on and interactive course redesign workshops, academic staff was supported to work with and align concepts, learning outcomes, assessment methods and teaching and learning strategies for their courses. The process enabled them to allow for significant learning in their students and teaching for critical thinking and problems solving skills. Gender responsive considerations were woven through the course redesign process.

Building on previous work and resources from the Forum for African Women Educationalists (FAWE)⁴ and the Commonwealth of Learning,⁵ a group of pedagogy and project experts from INASP and AFELT, accompanied by an external gender expert, Charlotte Nussey, outlined seven key teaching and learning spaces in which a gender lens should be integrated (see diagram below).

Across these spaces, six dimensions were identified that would be reviewed and considered as each facilitator of learning⁶ worked to redesign their course and make it more gender responsive in the process: representation; equality vs equity; stereotypes; internalised bias; interaction and space; and empowerment.



⁴ Mlama, P., Dioum, M., Makoye, H., Murage, L., Wagah, M., & Washika, R. 2005. Gender Responsive Pedagogy (GRP): A Teacher's Handbook, Forum for African Women Educationalists: https://issuu.com/fawe/docs/gender_responsive_pedagogy_-_a_teach

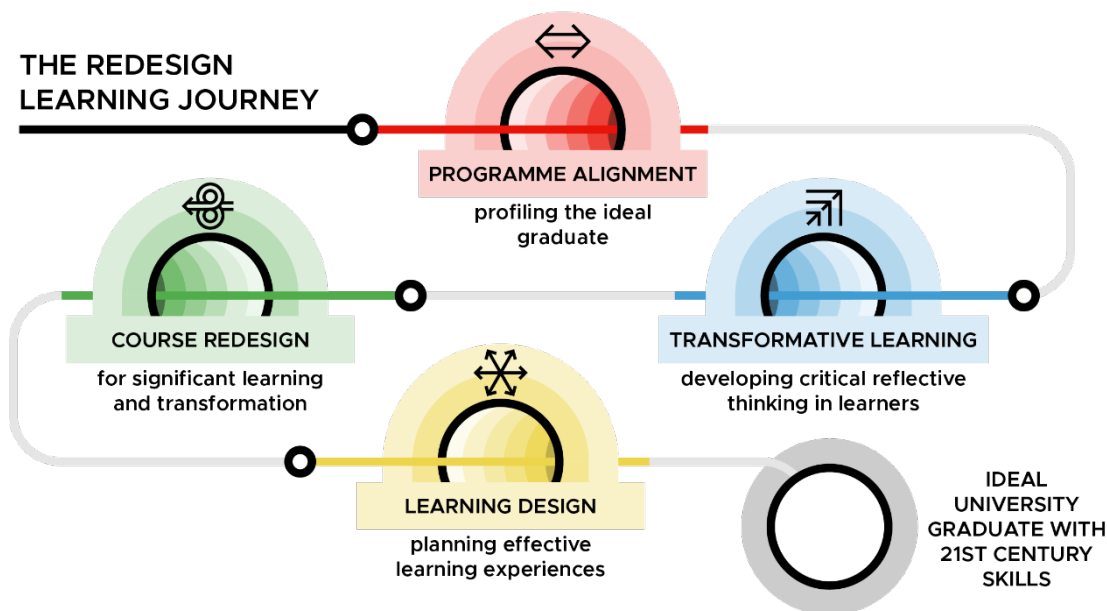
⁵ Frei, S., & Leowinata, S. 2014. Gender Mainstreaming Toolkit for Teachers and Teacher Educators, Commonwealth of Learning: www.ungei.org/sites/default/files/Gender-mainstreaming-toolkit-for-teachers-and-teacher-educators-2014-eng.pdf

⁶ In the TESCEA project we used the term 'facilitator of learning' instead of 'teacher', 'instructor' and 'lecturer' to reflect the learning philosophy and pedagogical approaches promoted by the project.

In the course redesign workshops, academic staff worked through the spaces and dimensions and considered these in relation to the course they were redesigning. And, simultaneously, the teaching staff was also facilitated through a process of building a more general understanding of gender and gender gaps in the higher education sector and in their country. This process supported the facilitators of learning in moving from gender-blindness to gender-awareness. The ultimate aim was to become gender-responsive facilitators of learning and, in turn, encourage their students to become future gender-responsive professionals.

The project also aimed to work beyond the classroom to ensure that universities created supporting environments to ensure the long-term sustainability of the gender-responsive teaching and learning approach. This included:

- Desk consultations by each university team on gender gaps in graduates
- Consultations with external stakeholders⁷ on gender norms in their industries
- Training and mentoring of a group of gender champions⁸
- University policy and practice reviews that aimed to ensure policies supported the lasting change catalysed by the TESCEA model (see below)
- Discussions with university management on gender gaps, best practices related to gender responsiveness and ways to improve or create gender responsive learning spaces



The TESCEA redesign learning journey; for more on the TESCEA model, including toolkits, case studies and other resources, see www.transformHE.org.

⁷ Mutonyi, H. and Dryden, J. (2021). The TESCEA approach to Joint Advisory Groups (JAGs), TESCEA case study. <https://www.transformhe.org/case-studies/categories/jags>

⁸ Mutonyi, H. and Dryden, J. (2021). The TESCEA approach to multipliers, TESCEA case study. <https://www.transformhe.org/case-studies/categories/multipliers>

3 Key learning points

3.1 Gender-responsive pedagogy tackles gender inequalities in teaching and learning for both academic staff and students

The TESCEA gender-responsive pedagogy approach has led to a shift in student practice and activities with students becoming more active learners, who are not intimidated to interact with their fellow students or their teachers, and who assume more confident roles in class (see box for some of the findings from the TESCEA evaluation⁹).

The focus on gender-responsive pedagogy has ensured that the increased participation and interaction has benefitted both female and male students. This has been noticed by academic staff as well as students:

“The gender aspect has enabled me [to] give equal opportunities to both girls and boys in my class and avoid being gender blind.”

“My class had some learners who couldn’t easily interact with another gender. Both females and males had this kind of learners, however female were most affected. I made efforts to make them interact in discussion and leading of the discussions. The strategy showed improvement; the introspective learners become active and can interact with both genders. The most interesting is the growth of confidence when contributing. Hopeful this can help learners in not only the learning environment but in their job and back to families.”
(Facilitator of learning, Mzumbe University)¹⁰

“In student group discussions, gender inclusion is highly emphasized, gender ministries in the guild and faculty student leaderships really ensure and advocate for gender rights.”
(Male student, Gulu University)

“Leadership is given equally to both girls and boys. We both have the same participation opportunities during lecturers.”
(Female student, Uganda Martyrs University)

The impact of gender-responsive pedagogy on female students is particularly noticeable. They are now more confident, more likely to speak up and take on leadership roles in class:

“I now have a new life experience in academics. As a female student, I did not play any leadership role in my class. I was taught to respect and obey what my teacher taught me whether correct or wrong. I now have learned how to say no, discuss, disagree and to compromise on issues that affect society in general. I think I have gained some form of personal freedom and the willingness to lead.”
(Female student, University of Dodoma)

“I gained a lot of skills during our engagements as male and female learners in groups where I developed teamwork, self-awareness, communication and how to solve problem as a team. This way of learning necessitating male and female learners to have leadership roles in the groups and being aware of male and female requirements in the learning process and stimulates the learner on how to think as an individual and in the team during the learning process.”
(Female student, University of Dodoma).

After TESCEA approaches were introduced, students reported a 10% increase in their ability to “understand someone else’s views by imagining how an issue looks from his or her perspective” and a 9% increase in being able to apply “facts, theories or methods (for example to practical problems or new situations)”.

They also reported a 12% increase in asking questions often or very often in taught sessions and a 5% increase in working with other students often or very often on course projects or assignments.

For more data on impacts of TESCEA on student practice and activities, see page 17 of the TESCEA evaluation.

⁹ Dooley, G., Luswata, A., Malagala, A., Milanzi, M., Ngowi, E., Nzegwu, F., Printer Otieno, A. and Sikalieh, D., (2021), Transforming Employability for Social Change in East Africa: an Evaluation, INASP report. <https://www.inasp.info/publications/transforming-employability-social-change-east-africa-evaluation>

¹⁰ Skovgaard, M. (2020). How to make university classes more gender responsive, INASP blog. <https://blog.inasp.info/how-to-make-university-classes-more-gender-responsive/>

And, as this student goes on to observe, the impact is being felt not only by the female students themselves, but also be the people around them:

“Now I do think and behave differently and this has been noticed by friends, am now confident in my learning and I learn differently and in a positive way.”
(Female student, University of Dodoma)

Gender-responsive pedagogy contributes to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). By tackling gender inequalities in teaching and learning and creating confident female students who are not afraid to take on leadership roles, gender-responsive pedagogy contributes to the achievement of SDG 4: Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all and SDG 5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls. In particular, gender-responsive pedagogy contributes to the following targets:

SDG 4.7: By 2030, ensure that all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including, among others, through education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, **gender equality**, promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship and appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture’s contribution to sustainable development

SDG 5.1: End all forms of discrimination against all women and girls everywhere

SDG 5.5: Ensure women’s full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic and public life.

3.2 There are entry points and ‘quick wins’ for tackling gender gaps in teaching and learning that are immediately visible

Although undertaking a curriculum redesign process can be intense and long-term, some aspects of gender-responsive pedagogy are immediately applied and immediately impactful.

The use of language is particularly seen as an easy area of change. At the end of the project 96% of academic staff involved noted they ‘use gender sensitive language while teaching’; this was up from 25% at the start of the project. Using gender-sensitive language and advocating for their students to be conscious of the language they use is an easy-to-apply initiative where change is also immediately visible. This was not only seen in the language used by facilitators of learning but also in their willingness to challenge the language used in case studies and texts, or by their students.

Another ‘quick win’ is how facilitators of learning manage their classrooms, particularly where students sit, who is called upon to answer a question, and how small groups are formed and led. There was a huge increase in facilitators of learning organising their classrooms to be gender-responsive (83% up from 33%) with emphasis placed on seating and group arrangements. Facilitators of learning expressed that promoting mixed gender groups, encouraging women to take group leadership roles, and advocating for equal voices in classroom interactions, are easy adaptations to make, as they can be applied almost instantly. Facilitators of learning have the authority and often the power to subtly shape interactions by consciously encouraging a diversity of voices, and by encouraging young women to play leadership roles in groups and to be more confident in speaking up in class. At the same time, they can consciously call out where male students may be dominating or interrupting fellow students to make the group aware that many societal interactions tend to favour the ample voice of men, and the diminished voice of women.

One male facilitator of learning from Mzumbe University explains how he has changed the way he delivers his course:

“I consider gender issues from the first levels of lesson preparation, class implementations, assessment, class examples, classroom sitting plan, and even representativeness.”

Another facilitator of learning discusses the language they use in class:

“The language I use in class is inclusive, the examples I use are inclusive and using a language that uplifts both male and female students.”
(Female facilitator of learning, Uganda Martyrs University).

3.3 Gender-responsive pedagogy supports transformative learning by meeting all students where they are

Gender-responsive pedagogy supports transformative learning in a number of ways:

- **By helping learners to become aware of assumptions related to gender**
A key tenet of facilitating transformative learning is to help learners become aware and critical of their own and others' assumptions.¹¹ Gender-responsive pedagogy supports this process by helping learners to critically engage with their own and society's assumptions, biases and beliefs in relation to gender and the roles that women and men can play.
- **By helping to ensure that teaching and learning materials are reflective of the real-life experiences of both female and male learners**
Transformative learning values *meaning making* over *sense making*. In order to facilitate meaning making, learners should be helped to 'actively engage the concepts presented in the context of their own lives' and teaching and learning materials should reflect the real-life experience of learners. Gender-responsive pedagogy supports this by enabling educators to examine the teaching and learning materials and examples that they use through a gender lens to ensure that they reflect the real-life experiences of both female and male learners.
- **By ensuring that both female and male learners are able to fully participate in discourse and group work**
For transformative learning to take place, all learners need to be assisted to participate effectively in discourse and group work. Gender-responsive pedagogy helps to ensure that both female and male learners are able to participate equally in discourse and group work, and are able to assume the various roles needed for this (for example, chair, note taker, speaker).

3.4 Creating lasting change in institutions, and in teaching and learning, is about more than just gender mainstreaming

Many gender mainstreaming initiatives in higher education focus on changing policies and fixing human resources practices, but this approach often fails to create long-lasting change because it does not tackle the attitudes and perceptions that lead to deeply institutionalised inequalities. In many instances, university leadership create policies, issue supportive statements about gender equality and sometimes create gender 'desks.' And yet, inequalities persist because change needs to happen at both the individual and the institutional level.

In TESCEA, we saw that supporting and training academic staff to incorporate a gender-responsive lens into their teaching had wider impacts than merely on their own awareness and actions of gender inequalities. By working directly at the level of lecturer and professor, we found it a unique entry point for addressing organisational inequalities; the small changes they made in teaching, and the impact on students, gradually built momentum for wider change. We saw that educators have a lot of power to change conversations – they can advocate up at senior university leadership level, and they can have tremendous influence over their students by challenging gender norms, changing the language they use, and actively encouraging their students to do the same.

One male facilitator of learning from the University of Dodoma explained that the gender-responsive pedagogy process within TESCEA pushed the university to do more with its gender policy: "The University has Gender Policy, but before TESCEA introduced the policy was dormant. Now thank you to TESCEA the university has gone further introducing action plans and affirmative actions to improve on gender equity."

Importantly, redesigning teaching and learning can also address unconscious and unnoticed gender biases that perpetuate harmful gender stereotypes at all levels in a higher learning institution. Because the 'hidden curriculum'¹² of norms, stereotypes and assumptions about the world is present in teacher-learner interactions, in many instances this leads to the replication of harmful gender norms and biases in class and on campus. As a result, many interactions in class can downplay a women's intelligence or

¹¹ Simsek A. (2012), Transformational Learning. In: Seel N.M. (eds) Encyclopedia of the Sciences of Learning. Springer, Boston, MA. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4419-1428-6_373

¹² Chapin, J. (2021), Untangling the impact of gender in the 'hidden curriculum', INASP blog. <https://blog.inasp.info/untangling-the-impact-of-gender-in-the-hidden-curriculum/>

achievements, and lead to a gender divide in group dynamics, with men dominating discussions and subject areas (for example, STEM) that lead to traditionally highly-skilled and highly-paid professions.

Case study: Gender at Gulu University

At Gulu University, TESCEA led to the development of a gender policy after it was pointed out at a TESCEA workshop that the lack of a formal structure around gender was a barrier to the long-term sustainability of gender-responsive teaching. As a result, the university is in the process of developing and implementing a gender and safeguarding policy which will integrate gender across internship placements, graduate employment, and in entrepreneurship opportunities. This policy is complemented by a 'gender unit', which has been established and is in the process of being staffed.

Gulu University's gender lead, Christine Oryema, reflects on what this unit means to the institution:

"The establishment of the gender unit has been a great step for Gulu University to have an autonomous office for handling gender related issues. Before, gender mainstreaming was considered a small unit under the academic registrar and was mainly concerned with admission issues. However, with the TESCEA project, the university has realised that gender encompasses more than admission and requires special attention. Gulu University is now in the process of appointing an officer to take full responsibility of this. The gender policy, anti-sexual harassment policies, safeguarding policies and whistle blowing policies are all likely to be handled by this unit."

For more case studies about TESCEA's approach to gender, see our case study collection.¹³

3.5 Lasting change requires support, commitment and time

Through the TESCEA project we identified some key elements that enable successful and lasting change in addressing higher education gender imbalances.

Identifying and amplifying Gender Champions is integral to creating lasting change

The establishment of the cross-partnership Gender Working Group acted as a springboard for gender mainstreaming and embedding gender-responsive pedagogy into the course redesign process. A key activity of the project was investing time and effort in building up local institutional teams who could become experts in the approach and support long-term entrenchment in the institution by training and supporting new staff members. The people in these teams were called 'multipliers' and they were expected to have participated in at least one course redesign/gender-responsive pedagogy workshop and to complete a five-day Gender Training of Trainers that focused not only on supporting gender-responsive pedagogy but also on training for gender sensitisation.

With teams of up to four multipliers at each university, they proved an invaluable resource. Not only did they support integrating the approach in between workshops (with the INASP and AFELT teams based in other countries) but they also acted as role models for their colleagues, showing them that the approach was worthwhile and impactful. The Gender Working Group acted as a support group and resource hub for the 'multipliers' and played a central role in supporting gender units both in institutions where these already existed as well as in institutions that decided to establish a gender unit as a result of the TESCEA project.

Changing opinions on gender takes time and is incremental

A five-day workshop is unlikely to fully transform a person's perceptions of gender, but self-awareness does build incrementally with each training, interaction and discussion with colleagues. In TESCEA we saw that some academic staff were not engaged in discussions of gender at the start of the project, but, as they saw the change taking place through their colleagues and students, they became more willing to make their own changes, swept up in the momentum of the new approach. However, it sometimes took two or three sets of training before we could see this shift in attitude.

¹³ Mutonyi, H. and Dryden, J. (2021). The TESCEA approach to gender equity, TESCEA case study. <https://www.transformhe.org/case-studies/categories/gender>

Building lasting change is about more than just changing the curriculum

In most instances, for change to happen, it needs to take place across multiple levels. As we know from INASP's approach to capacity development,¹⁴ real change happens when it tackles all levels: The individual, institutional and systemic.

In TESCEA, the gender-responsive pedagogy was first tackled at the individual level, with academic staff supported in sensitisation and understanding of the new approach, and in using it. A team of multipliers supported facilitators of learning locally with implementation help and mentorship, and contributed to institutional sustainability. Students were sensitised to the new approach, both in classroom and in wider university events. At the institutional level, advocacy was undertaken at the senior leadership level to encourage them to ensure the university environment enabled the approach to be sustainable, undertaking baseline research, sensitisation and changing or creating supportive policies. At the wider level, key stakeholders were invited to be part of the process, and to advocate for it more widely, through their participation on the Joint Advisory Groups (see box).

Lastly, at the partnership level, all seven partners in TESCEA supported and learned from each other, with the establishment of a Gender Working Group that ensured accountability for the partnership in applying its gender-responsive principles.

Leadership buy-in continues to be important

Many university teams spent countless hours in the first year of the project presenting the project approach and justifying the return on investment (mainly of their staff time and resource) for supporting it. In all cases, this was important in justifying to academic staff that time spent on this was worthwhile, but also that this was about a new approach university-wide, not just a request to create more work. At Uganda Martyrs University, senior leadership were invited to participate in each of the transformative learning and course redesign workshops. Because of this, they were able to internalise the new approach and apply it, gaining their own desire to see change happen.

Space needs to be created to tackle gender inequalities

In TESCEA, our gender-responsive approach was integrated into a wider curriculum redesign approach. This meant that time was always at a premium and that time to focus on gender often meant less time to focus on transformative learning. If we were to do this again, we would create training activities specifically around gender that would allow this important topic room to breathe without it competing for time with another pedagogical approach. We would also work to create space at the partnership level to sensitise the partnership steering group to the process before it was passed to their teams.

What are JAGs?

The Joint Advisory Groups (JAGs) at each of the universities are collaborative forums comprised of members from academia, industry, the community and public sector relevant to the courses being redesigned. Each JAG member brings the unique voices and perspectives of their sector to the project.

The groups meet regularly to advise on, support and engage their individual sectors in the development of a critical thinking, problem solving and gender equitable teaching and learning environment.

3.6 Linking teaching and learning to the world of employment can contribute to tackling gender inequities beyond university

Although we will not be able to see the TESCEA students through to graduation within the lifetime of the project, there are some promising indications that our focus on gender-responsive pedagogy will have an impact not only while students are at university, but also when they enter the workplace.

Students will bring what they have learned about being gender responsive into their professions

- Education programme students are replicating the gender-responsive approaches of university teaching staff when they are practicing teaching themselves:
"I witnessed a student teacher reorganising the sitting arrangement during school practice after he realised that girls were seated on one side and boys on the other. And to me, that is positive change in the way the students approach the issue of gender-responsive pedagogy."
(Facilitator of learning, Uganda Martyrs University)¹⁵

¹⁴ Capacity development at INASP, INASP website. <https://www.inasp.info/theme/capacity-development>

¹⁵ Skovgaard, M. (2020). How to make university classes more gender responsive, INASP blog. <https://blog.inasp.info/how-to-make-university-classes-more-gender-responsive/>

- During a Uganda Martyrs University course redesign session, one facilitator of learning was focused on redesigning her introductory course to Human Resources Management. At first, she did not see where gender could be integrated into her course content; it was only when she considered how she could prepare her students to encounter gender issues in the workplace that she realised gender issues should be integrated throughout her lessons. Once she did this, she realised she had a huge role to play in preparing her students for a work environment where gender issues are present – harassment, discrimination and issues of safety – so that they could be better HR professionals.

Employers who have been engaged in TESCEA are starting to recognise the importance of addressing gender imbalances within their industries

- 55% of the Joint Advisory Group (JAG, see box) members who took part in the TESCEA evaluation believed that there are issues affecting the access of female and male students to good placements in industry. While the JAG members stated that there were no explicit barriers imposed by industries and that there were policies to guard against this, there was a general acknowledgement that there was a gender imbalance within many industries and that this should be addressed.¹⁶
- Some JAG members recognised the importance of empowering female students:
“In most cases women are not empowered enough to be assertive [...] The dis-empowerment of female students is sometimes caused by lack of gender-responsive teaching and learning processes, that are deep rooted in patriarchal system [...]”
(TESCEA JAG member, and member, Forum for African Women Educationalists Tanzania)
- Some JAG members reported already seeing this empowerment of female students:
“Sometimes it’s just a mindset issue or cultural. At our farm now we see female students taking on activities like tractor driving that has from long ago been associated to male gender.”
(TESCEA JAG member)

The change we have seen – findings from the TESCEA evaluation on gender

Gender was one of the aspects of TESCEA scrutinised in the project evaluation. The evidence presented to the evaluation team suggests the following key findings:

Academic staff

- Gender-responsive pedagogical approaches are becoming an integral part of both lesson planning and how **academic staff** prepare group work and classroom seating arrangements
- Academic staffs’ gender-related perceptions, attitudes and teaching practices have shifted towards a greater consciousness and practice of gender equity

Students

- The gender-responsive design of TESCEA has contributed to positive shifts in **students’** behaviours and attitudes. Students are more active learners. They are not intimidated to interact with their fellow students, or their teachers and they assume more confident roles in class.
- There are increased levels of gender interaction and awareness raising in classroom settings.

Institution

- **Senior management** either have or are working to develop gender policies and plans to promote greater gender equity in and outside the classroom
- All four TESCEA **universities** have strategies, plans and/or structures to create greater gender equity awareness among staff and students

For more details on these findings and others, read the full evaluation.¹⁷

¹⁶ Dooley, G., Luswata, A., Malagala, A., Milanzi, M., Ngowi, E., Nzegwu, F., Printer Otieno, A. and Sikalieh, D., (2021), Transforming Employability for Social Change in East Africa: an Evaluation, INASP report. <https://www.inasp.info/publications/transforming-employability-social-change-east-africa-evaluation>

¹⁷ See footnote 16 above

4 Recommendations

As a result of our partnership's experience of developing and applying a gender-responsive pedagogy approach to the TESCEA project, we have the following recommendations:

- **Gender-responsive pedagogy should be incorporated into any higher education pedagogical reform initiative** to ensure that the needs of female and male students are met and that they will benefit equally from improved teaching and learning practices.
- Institutional gender mainstreaming in a higher education environment should always ensure **it addresses teaching and learning so that both academic staff and students evolve their attitudes, biases and perceptions of gender in society**. Mainstreaming of policies and practices on their own will not change attitudes and beliefs unless the teaching environment and materials are also addressed.
- **Long-lasting change is about tackling change at multiple levels:** Addressing gender in teaching and learning is not only about the process of training academic staff to implement and understand a new approach. It is also about creating an institutional environment that enables long-lasting change. Institutional multipliers, student awareness, leadership buy-in and broader gender sensitisation all support a sustainable approach.
- Building gender awareness needs space to breathe. Changing people's perceptions and beliefs does not happen overnight, and usually happens incrementally over long periods of time. So, **ensuring space and openness to dialogue is key**.