

**Teachers' views on gender equity in
primary**

schools in Diepkloof, Soweto

by

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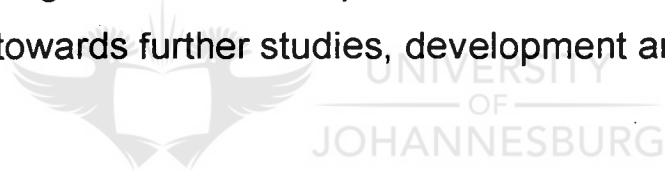
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Dedication

I dedicate this research to my mother Thabitha Makgamatha and my late father Junius Victor Maupi Makgamatha with great love, respect and gratitude for their persistent encouragement and support towards further studies, development and service.



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SUMMARY

The theme of this qualitative research essay is based on the need for gender awareness teaching in primary schools. Gender bias is one of the forms of discrimination that the South African constitution outlawed.

This essay discusses that inequalities between men and women still exist in our societies. Literature has confirmed that these discrepancies occur the world over, although the extent might differ.

Women and girls receive discriminational treatment from men and boys. This research focuses on teachers' views as well as their understanding of gender issues in education. Their role and that of the school in perpetuating genderedness is discussed. However, teachers and schools are seen as forceful agents of social change.

Zeichners' synthesis view of the four traditions of teacher education together with Vygotsky's emancipatory constructivism form the theoretical framework of this study. Critical ethnographic research methodology is applied for the collection, analysis and interpretation of data.

The role of teachers is crucial for the removal of gender stereotypes in schools. Teachers' self-awareness in interacting with learners is important for the implementation of gender equity in education.

The implications of the inquiry can be summarised as follows:

- The findings of the research clearly show that teachers have some understanding of gender issues. Teachers, however, need a deeper understanding of issues of gender in the classroom and in school generally.

- Gender awareness teaching has the capacity to be broadened to the children's homes. In this way the school and teachers become forceful agents of social change.
- The Curriculum should be accessible to all learners. Equitable treatment of learners depending on a specified need should be applied so that working towards equality is achieved. Subjects like Mathematics and Science should be taught in such a way that girls continue with them long after primary schools.
- Learning support materials should be selected with care. Teachers need to develop critical analysing skills when choosing, using, as well as developing support materials. The genderedness of materials should be exposed to the learners so that they too, develop a gender-free outlook to life.
- A wider variety of extracurricular activities for all children is needed in schools. Girls need to be encouraged to participate in school sport. The attire should be comfortable for them to participate fully in the field space provided in school.
- Through teachers' actions, school organisation, interaction and "conscientisation" of parents on gender matters, inequalities will eventually be removed in society.
- A need for the development of school gender policies was pointed out so that all stakeholders participate in the elimination of gender discrimination in school and society. All stakeholders should to be involved in the policy formulation process.
- A permeation INSET model is proposed for confronting gender inequity in primary schools for teachers to become self-reflective practitioners in

education. All stakeholders need to become part of a process that aims at entrenching gender awareness in education and eventually in the broader society.



OPSOMMING

Die tema van hierdie kwalitatiewe navorsing is gebaseer op die behoefte aan geslagsbewussynsonderrig in primêre skole. Geslagsvooroordeel is een van die vorms van diskriminasie wat deur die Suid-Afrikaanse grondwet verbied word.

Hierdie navorsing toon dat ongelykhede tussen mans en vrouens steeds in ons samelewing bestaan. Die literatuurstudie het bevestig dat hierdie onreëlmatighede dwars oor die wêreld voorkom, alhoewel die omvang daarvan mag verskil.

Vrouens en dogters word anders behandel as mans en seuns. Hierdie navorsing fokus op onderwysers se persepsies, asook hulle begrip van geslagsaangeleenthede in opvoeding. Die rol van die onderwyser en dié van die skool in geslagtelikheid word bespreek. Onderwysers en skole word egter gesien as magtige agente van sosiale verandering.

Zeichner se sintese van die vier tradisies van onderwysersopleiding gepaardgaande met Vygotsky se emansipatoriese konstruktivisme vorm die teoretiese raamwerk van die studie. Kritiese etnografiese navorsingsmetodologie is toegepas vir data-insameling, -analise en -interpretasie.

Die rol van onderwysers is noodsaaklik vir die verwydering van die stereotypering van geslag in skole. Onderwysers se selfbewussyn in hulle interaksie met leerders is belangrik vir die implementering van geslagsgelykheid in opvoeding.

Implikasies van die ondersoek

- Die navorsingsbevindings toon duidelik dat onderwysers 'n mate van begrip het van geslagsaangeleenthede. Onderwysers benodig egter 'n beter begrip van geslagsaangeleenthede in die klaskamer en die skool in

die algemeen.

- 'n Uitvoerbare model vir geslagsgelykheidsbewussyn in onderwys word sterk aanbeveel sodat alle onderwysers kan nadink oor hulle toepassing daarvan in alle vakke. Insette deur onderwysers word benodig om nuwe geslagsensitiewe maniere van onderrig daar te stel. Selfbewussyn is kritiek in hierdie geval.
- Geslagsbewussynsonderrig het die potensiaal om verbreed te word na die leerders se tuistes. Op hierdie manier word die skool en onderwysers magtige agente van sosiale verandering.
- Die kurrikulum behoort toeganklik te wees vir alle leerders. Gelyke behandeling van leerders afhangende van spesifieke behoeftes, behoort toegepas te word sodat daar gestreef word na gelykheid. Opleiding in vakke soos wiskunde en wetenskap behoort so toegepas te word dat meisies daarmee voortgaan lank na primêre skoolvlak.
- Leer-ondersteunende materiaal behoort met sorg gekies te word. Onderwysers moet krities-analitiese vaardighede ontwikkel en gebruik, asook ondersteunende materiaal ontwikkel. Die geslagtelikheid van materiaal behoort aan die leerders uitgewys te word sodat hulle ook 'n nie-diskriminerende lewensuitkyk sal ontwikkel.
- 'n Groter verskeidenheid buitemuurse aktiwiteite vir alle leerders is nodig in skole. Meisies moet aangemoedig word om aan skoolsport deel te neem. Die kleredrag behoort gemaklik te wees om volle deelname te verseker.
- Deur die daarstel van onderwysersaksies, skoolorganisasies, interaksie en bewusmaking van ouers ten opsigte van geslagsaangeleenthede, sal die ongelykhede uiteindelik uit die samelewing uitgeroei word.

- 'n Behoefte aan die ontwikkeling van 'n skoolbeleid ten opsigte van geslag is aangedui sodat alle aandeelhouders kan deelneem aan die eliminasië van geslagsdiskriminasië in die skool en samelewing. Alle betrokkenes behoort betrokke te wees by die beleidsformuleringsproses.
- 'n Uitvoerbare INSET-model word aanbeveel wat geslagsongelykheid in primêre skole aanspreek, sodat onderwysers kan ontwikkel in self-reflektiewe praktisyns. Alle betrokkenes moet deel word van die proses wat daarna streef om geslagsbewussyn in onderrig en uiteindelik die groter gemeenskap te bevorder.



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SECTION TWO

A LITERATURE REVIEW OF GENDER EQUITY IN EDUCATION

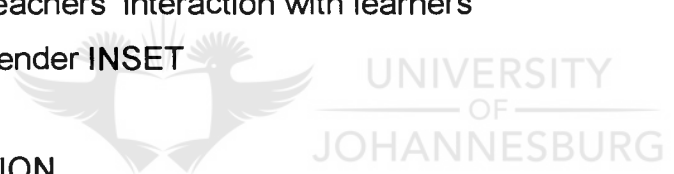
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SECTION ONE

ORIENTATION AND PROBLEM STATEMENT

1.1 INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

The democratic government of the Republic of South Africa (RSA) ushered in 1994, has made the publication of the constitution of the country in 1996 a milestone. I am motivated by the equality clause Section 9(3) in the RSA Constitution (1996) which outlaws all forms of discrimination, to research views of teachers on gender equity in primary schools. Teachers' understandings of gender issues will be embedded in the discussion. The influence of gendered behaviour displayed by teachers in their interaction with girls and boys in primary schools is crucial to this essay and ways to bring about changes will be recommended.

The first section of this qualitative study will comprise the following subheadings: background information to the research, a statement of the problem to be investigated, related questions and sub-questions, the purpose of the study as well as an overview of the whole essay and definitions of concepts.

1.2 BACKGROUND INFORMATION TO THE STUDY

All children have the right to grow and develop as it was stated at the United Nations Convention in 1979. The RSA joined the many countries that accepted the declaration on the Rights of Children in 1995 (Sweetman, 1995: 8-9). The statement on the right to education for all children is inclusive of girls and boys as is stated in the United Nations Conventions on the Rights of the Child.

President Thabo Mbeki of the RSA emphasised the need for a continued focus on the "development and emancipation of women "in his State of the Nation Address on 25 June 1999 (Government Communication & Information System, 1999:18). The government of the RSA is determined to put gender on the agenda. Gender equity in education is one of the areas where progress on implementing improvement strategies in school will be evaluated.

The emancipation and development of girls and women is pivotal in the country's plans for change. Support for gender equity in education is also provided in the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) which emphasises the right to be educated and developed. The need for schools and teachers to confront gender inequity in education is undisputed.

It is against the above background that the topic of this research focuses on gender equity in education specifically at primary school level. This research is based on the support for gender equity in education by the National Department of Education in RSA (DOE). The DOE is one of the 24 government departments of the RSA which has committed itself to mainstreaming gender concerns. The establishment of the Office of the Status of Women (OSW) situated in the President's Office has given emphasis to the need to mainstream gender issues (Burger, 1998:367).

The Gender Equity Task Team (GETT) which was summoned by the then Minister of Education in the RSA, Professor Bengu, published a report on Gender Equity in Education in 1997. The GETT report investigated gender issues in education and advised on how the situation could be improved across the education system (Wolpe *et al*, 1997:6):

- Early Childhood Development

- Schooling (Primary and Secondary)
- Further Education and Training
- Higher Education
- Adult Basic Education and Training
- Gender and Disability
- Gender and Education Management

I have chosen to divide the category “schooling” above into “primary” and “secondary” for the purpose of this research essay, which specifically focuses on the former. Primary school learners’ ages range from seven to thirteen years on the average. I appreciate the role of the state in providing the legal framework to influence changes in attitudes to gender equity in the practices of teachers in schools particularly.

Policy development is one strong anchor that is supportive of the process to confront gender-biases in schools. Of special importance to this essay is the Gauteng Department of Education’s (GDE) Gender Policy which was developed through broad consultation with all stakeholders and was launched at a public function on 5th August 1999 at the Mamelodi Campus of Vista University in the Gauteng Province. The GDE was well represented at this particular event and wonderful speeches of commitment to the implementation of the gender policy were enthusiastically presented.

The above background information has generated my interest to find out how the furtherance of the policy of gender would be affected by the views of teachers on these issues. The Committee on Teacher Education Policy (COTEP) has produced Norms and Standards for Teacher Education. This document provides a model for teacher development that emphasises the role of teachers as change agents in schools (Department of Education, 1998:89). Further discussion on this issue will be picked up in section two.

1.3 STATEMENT OF THE RESEARCH PROBLEM

The research problem in this study is the teachers' lack of awareness, knowledge and deep understanding of gender equity in primary schools in Diepkloof, Soweto. Teachers interact with girls and boys almost unconscious of the genderedness of their behaviours. This is due to their own individual socialisation as part of their initiation into a gendered society and also as a result of their pre-service and in-service teacher training where bias was maintained and perpetuated (Siraj- Blatchford, 1993:17).

Teachers' gendered behaviour in turn continues and entrenches inequity in school. Learners, both girls and boys are bound to grow and develop in a similar way that the home and the school prepare them in relation to gender. According to Siraj-Blatchford (1993:7), teacher education plays an important part in the "reproduction or reconstruction" of student teachers' attitudes and understandings which are later reflected in their school and classroom practices. The above quotation poses a dilemma for in-service teacher education.

The school and the teachers are regarded to be in a good position to reconstruct beliefs and values entrenched by societies they serve. On the other hand schools mirror communities' cultures, values, attitudes and beliefs and maintain and reproduce the status quo. I further argue that teachers are well placed to confront gender inequities in schools through a partnership approach to solutions to problems with communities. The parent community in primary schools have representative governance structures that have been introduced with the transformation of education management and provision. The School Governing Bodies which have been democratically elected by parents in schools serve as a strong link with the Education authorities (Gauteng Department of Education, 1997:1– 26).

I claim that there is a great need for the provision of teacher education and implementation strategies to remedy gender bias in primary schools to empower in-service educators.

I am mindful of the importance of teachers' willingness and commitment to change their gendered behaviours in primary schools in addition to knowledge acquisition and ways of facilitating the change in values, beliefs and attitudes in gender as emphasised by Siraj – Blatchford (1993: 14).

1.4 THE RESEARCH QUESTION AND SUB-QUESTIONS

The research question of this study is as follows:

How do teachers view gender equity in primary schools in Diepkloof, Soweto?

Sub-questions



The following are sub-questions related to the research question:

- i. What are the teachers' understandings of gender equity?
- ii. How were teachers socialised?
- iii. How do teachers divide labour in schools?
- iv. How is groupwork performed in schools?
- v. What subjects are offered in the school curriculum?
- vi. How do teachers view learning materials used in class?
- vii. How do teachers interact with their learners?
- viii. Is gender INSET important for teachers?

1.5 THE PURPOSE OF THIS STUDY

The purpose of this research essay is to examine whether teachers' interaction with primary school girls and boys perpetuates gender stereotyping and to find ways of reconstructing beliefs and attitudes formed.

The idea that gender stereotypes originating from home are perpetuated in schools is confirmed by the literature study in this research essay. This qualitative research essay applies critical ethnographic methods. Data are collected through focus group interviews and participant observation. An analysis of the findings that confirm the need for a deeper understanding of gender equity in primary schools is provided. A permeation INSET model for teacher education in gender facilitates a process of filtering awareness throughout the system. All subject teachers become aware of gender in schools as well as in their own classrooms. The whole school, according to this model, will be organised based on the need to mainstream gender. Gender equity in primary schools can become part of the main direction in the course of development. A permeation INSET model is recommended for teachers to become reflective practitioners who are aware of gendered behaviour in education.

1.6. OVERVIEW OF THIS STUDY

Section two comprises a review of literature with particular reference to the theory and practice of teacher education and gender equity in schooling. Section three gives a discussion on the research design of the study and the following are included in the discussion: Introduction, the setting of the inquiry, the research plan, sampling procedures, data collection and data analysis.

Section four will provide an explanation and interpretation of the investigation.

The following are subheadings discussed in this section:

- Overview of the section
- Discussion of the final categories
- Strengths and weaknesses of the study
- Implications of the inquiry
- Conclusion.

1.7 DEFINITION OF CONCEPTS

The aim of this part of the research essay is to provide a common understanding of the concepts used in this study.

1.7.1 Equity in schooling

The concept, "equity in schooling" refers to equal access to educational provision by all learners. This concept acknowledges that there is need for affirmative action for previously disadvantaged learners, who would need to be brought to the same level as the others (Wolpe *et al*, 1997:269).

1.7.2 Sex Discrimination

Sex discrimination occurs when a person is treated less favourably than another would be because of their sex (Wolpe *et al*, 1997:268).

1.7.3 Gender

The concept gender refers to the manner in which females and males are socially produced by humankind. All individuals' gender is affected by a variety of attributes including class, culture, religion, family roles, sexual orientation, able-bodiedness and place of abode amongst others (Wolpe *et al*, 1997:270). The

GETT report further states that gender is not static as culture changes and evolves over time.

1.7.4 Sex differences

Sex differences refer to biological differences between men and women (Wolpe *et al*, 1997:270).

1.7.5 Socialisation

Copying how role models or adults behave, assimilating values and beliefs through interaction in the family and community, following the media dictates and being told what behaviour are acceptable is referred to as the process of socialisation. Research has challenged the effectiveness of the model of the socialisation process saying that schools are in a position to change "alternative courses of action" and behaviour learned. Learners as human beings have options to choose from and the model can be rendered ineffective (Wolpe *et al*, 1997:275).

1.7.6 Teacher education

The COTEP document (Department of Education, 1997:26) highlighted key issues in relation to teacher education namely that:

- There is need for a dynamic, transformatory and emancipatory model for the education of teachers.
- Teachers need to become reflective practitioners and that emphasis must be put on creating opportunities for learners.
- It moves away from institution- based to programme-based models.

- It regards INSET and PRESET as continuing and not as mutually exclusive (Wolpe *et al*, 1997: 49).

1.7.7 List of abbreviations

- CEDAW
Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women
- CGE
Commission on Gender Equality
- COTEP
Committee on Teacher Education Policy
- DOE
Department of Education
- GDE
Gauteng Department of Education
- GETT
Gender Equity Task Team
- INSET
In-service Education and Training
- NQF
National Qualifications Framework



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- OSW
Office of the Status of Women
- PRE-SET
Pre-service Education and Training
- RSA
Republic of South Africa
- SGB
School Governing Body

1.7.8 Primary schools

The concept refers to all learners from grade one to grade six as seen in figure 1 of the bands of the NQF. Learners at this level are between seven and twelve years of age on average. Primary schools cover the following phases in the NQF structure:

- Foundation and
- Intermediate

The NQF structure integrates education and training which were separated in the old system of South African education. All learners at all the levels of learning, will be able to “move between learning environments” because the new qualifications are transferable (Downes-Webb, n.d.:1).

See figure 1.1 on the levels, bands and fields of the NQF on page 11.

1.8 CONCLUSION

The need to confront gender inequity in schools and of importance to this study, primary schools, is being discussed in this study. Teacher education has a role to play to correct the situation. Section one of this study gave a detailed background to the research. The main questions as well as sub-questions have been stated in this section. Concepts have been defined to establish a common understanding of their meanings as used in this essay.



SECTION TWO

A LITERATURE REVIEW OF GENDER EQUITY IN EDUCATION

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The discussion of this essay focuses specifically on gender issues in primary schools. Although it is confirmed by research that attitudes about sex role can be introduced and changed at any educational level, Weiner (1990:56) purports that the earlier it happens, the less “re-education is necessary”. This view has a direct link with my choice of educational level for this research essay.

This section on related literature review explores the theoretical framework on which the research essay is based. Also, I discuss the need for applying equitable approaches over equality ones to gender equity in schools. Sex-role differentiation and the role of education, schools and teachers in removing such a notion is fully debated in this section. Solutions to confronting gender inequity in primary schools can be provided through in-service teacher education.

2.2 OVERVIEW OF SECTION TWO

The following subheadings are discussed in detail in this review of related literature:

- Theoretical framework
- Sex-role differentiation
- Gender equity in primary school
- Perpetuation of gender inequity in schools
- Schools as change agents

- The role of teachers
- In-service teacher education
- Conclusion

2.3 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK FOR THE STUDY

The work of Zeichner (1993:1-13) provides a conceptual framework on which this study on gender equity in primary schools is based. Four traditions of teacher education practice in the United States are discussed:

- The academic tradition
- The social efficiency tradition
- The developmentalist tradition
- The Social reconstructionist tradition

The academic tradition emphasises the mastery of the subject matter. Teachers are regarded as experts in their field and they have a scholastic role to play. This approach has been criticised as elitist because there is no emphasis on how disadvantaged communities are taught. Knowledge of the subject matter alone does not make a good teacher. Education courses are necessary so that teachers are able to transform the subject content to encourage meaningful learning and understanding. Feminists criticised this approach to teacher development because it emphasised the "mind, not head, thought not action, production not reproduction and reason not emotion" (Zeichner, 1993:1-13).

The social efficiency tradition emphasised the need for a teacher education curriculum. The aim of this approach was to "strengthen educationalists" by providing descriptions of duties and traits of teachers. It is based on behaviourist psychology which emphasises competency based education. Performance and acquisition of observable skills of teachers are linked to how learning takes place.

Processes that resulted from the social efficiency tradition include microteaching, management systems, evaluation and classroom observation. This tradition relies on scientific studies of teaching.

The developmentalist tradition is a progressive approach to teacher education. It is a student-centered approach to teacher education. Learner's development determine the content and method of teaching. Learner behaviour is observed at all stages of development. A teacher is regarded as a "naturalist" who "stimulates" and "excites" learners and a "researcher" who studies child development. Similar views to the developmentalist approach are "personalised", "cognitivist" as well as "constructivist" teacher education.

The social reconstructionist tradition regards teacher education as a necessary ingredient for a "just and humane society". Schools are able to provide solutions to "liberate" and to redress problems created in the economy as was the case in the United States in the 1920's. This is a socialist approach to teacher education. Teachers are to become agents of change who can think critically. Schools would indoctrinate individuals in socialism. A criticism on the role of the school in furthering socialism was made by Holmes in Zeichner (1993:6-7). Emphasis is needed to be placed on abilities to think critically. This approach to teacher education emphasises that focus must be placed on removing inequalities, by addressing suffering and injustice.

This research essay on the views of teachers on gender equity in primary schools is based on a synthesis of the four teacher education traditions of Zeichner (1993:1-13). He alluded that none of the approaches can be applied in isolation when he wrote, "no teacher education programme can be understood in relation to one tradition". The academic approach is important in so far as the content of teaching is needed. In discussing the intellectual root to teacher education, I align myself with a view that says academic education alone is too elitist. The schools focused on in this research cater for township children whose

parents either work for little or are unemployed. There is a need for an approach that accommodates the needs of children accordingly.

The social efficiency tradition should also be applied in teacher education in order that teachers acquire skills and competencies required for the implementation of curriculum transformation. On the other hand, the developmentalist tradition is a learner-centered approach to teacher education. Learners need a teacher who is flexible and possesses capabilities of creating an environment suitable for learning.

Richardson (1997:29f), discusses Vygotsky's constructivism in knowledge-making. Through this view, knowledge is created by learners through teachers' guidance. Teachers are regarded as mediators of knowledge and this research essay on gender equity in primary schools emphasises their role as change agents. I integrate "emancipatory constructivism" of Vygotsky with a synthesis view of the four traditions of teacher education as seen by Zeichner. Creation of knowledge to promote gender equity in primary schools should also have an emancipatory role. Teachers are in a position to provide learners with tools that will lead to their enfranchisement.

I regard the developmentalist tradition with a constructivist orientation to be of great relevance to this research. The topic on gender issues in education suggests emancipation of the disadvantaged gender, whichever it might be depending on situations.

Emancipatory constructivism is one of the constructivisms of Vygotsky as noted above. This liberatory orientation of constructivism is based on Vygotsky's theory of development. It is an approach that confronts inequalities of class, race and of importance to this essay, gender. Through this theoretical lens the individual is situated in an environment with its culture, values, beliefs and norms.

The context is important in “emancipatory constructivism”. Knowledge is constructed through the influence of the environment. The concept “emancipatory constructivism” implies that there is inequality and behaviour, qualities and characteristics are more important and highly regarded over others.

I have selected emancipatory constructivism as an approach to this theoretical study because of its similarities with the liberatory model. The liberatory model regards women as oppressed although not necessarily different from men. I nevertheless not only emphasise the oppression of women alone, but include individual men and boys.

There are cases of inequality experienced by boys in classrooms and in school that need to be exposed and corrected. This study views men and women, boys and girls as having a role to play together in confronting inequities. The approach in this research is reconciliatory and non-confrontational. Gender in education is a “consciousness-raising” process that aims at transforming “patriarchal structures” that entrenched men’s superiority in societies. Teacher education, I stress, has a role to play to facilitate this awareness-raising (Richardson, 1997:29f).

Walters & Manicon (1996:29) agree that awareness-raising is a socially produced phenomenon. It involves feelings, context and acquisition of knowledge. To overcome this inadequacy, they point out that a “self-critique” is essential. Self-awareness and a reflective teaching practice is suggested in this qualitative research so that the goal of reconstructing gender stereotypes can be achieved. Boys, girls, men, women and ultimately the wider society should be able to see a change.

Zeichner’s fourth tradition of teacher education, social reconstructionism, has partially informed this study. The inequalities in society and the role of the school in combating them will be discussed in this essay.

There are areas of commonalities between the social reconstruction tradition of Zeichner and the emancipatory constructivism of Vygotsky. Both orientations are built on a premise that inequality exists in society and that there is a need to redress them. Emphasis is placed on critical analysis and being reflective practitioners in teacher education as indicated in the works of Richardson (1997:33) and Voorbach & Prick (1990:112). Also, a word of caution is given to the idea that constructivist teaching and teacher education need to take place in the classroom, with teachers and learners interacting and linking theory with practice. Vygotsky's emancipatory constructivism, as well as social reconstructionism of Zeichner are geared towards change in the classroom.

2.4 SEX-ROLE DIFFERENTIATION/DISCRIMINATION

In this quotation "Male-ruled SA still far from the gender equality", Bothma (1998) shows that the road to removing gender inequalities is still long. He was referring to words by ex-President Mandela of South Africa when he launched the Commission on Gender Equality.

Research globally has indicated that differences between men and women are minimal. It was found that no "appreciable differences" between girls and boys existed in relation to reading and communication. Neither are differences in abilities in Mathematics and Science of any concern (Hyde, 1993 *in* Murray, 1996:34). The refutation of differences between boys and girls, males and females as indicated above negates what Guttentag and BraY (1976:11,24) noted about such.

Sex refers to the biological differences that denote males from females whilst gender is socially constructed and learned behaviours that are linked to the sexes (Anderson, 1988 *in* Murray, 1996:347f; Siraj-Blatchford, 1993:76; Streitmatter 1994:3). Gender stereotypes are based on culture and religion and

are not fixed. A dichotomy between boys and girls and men and women has dominated societies on discrimination based on sex. Men are regarded as independent, assertive, dominant, powerful and are decision-makers. Women on the other hand are described as dependent, submissive, passive and warm (Askew & Ross, 1988:2; Guttentag & Bray, 1976:11; Streitmatter 1994:3; Thorne, 1993:158; and Wrigley, 1992:131).

This study aims at a discussion that can lead teachers towards destroying sex dichotomies and encouraging individual learners, boys and girls to perform to their optimum potential.

Female teachers are found in high percentages in primary schools in South Africa as compared to their male counterparts. This fact is an endorsement of women as caring for children, both in communities and at work as teachers. Female teachers continue the mothering role for boys and girls at schools (Lessing, 1994:103f).

2.5 GENDER EQUITY IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS

Streitmatter (1994:8f) differentiates gender equity through an equitable framework from one with an equality approach. The former approach is based on a premise that one group has been deprived and was disadvantaged. This essay agrees that the girl-child has been more disadvantaged than the boy-child. The equitable framework to gender equity in the classroom would then expect teachers to concentrate more efforts on girls in order to bring them on par with boys.

I argue that this approach to equity needs to be considered for both sexes depending on the gender issue at hand, for example, if boys do not read as well as girls do, they should be given more help to uplift them to the level of girls. In the same way, if girls do not perform so well in mathematics, there should be



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strategies to upgrade their performance in the subject.

It is clear that outcomes of learning processes are of importance to the equitable approach to gender fairness in education. Wilkinson and Marret (1985:6) as well as Sutherland (1999:48) also emphasise that girls need to be afforded equitable treatment for the outcomes of their efforts to be equal to that of boys.

The equality approach to gender equity offers equal inputs regardless of previous disadvantage of learners. Such an approach to gender equity does not yield equal outcomes because it does not consider where different groups come from. Boys and girls are given equal treatment although the disadvantages associated with females need special attention to be removed. I agree that the equality approach to gender equity is more acceptable to the group that did not suffer any deprivation. On the other hand, I emphasise that the imbalances need to be redressed through equitable means to gender equity.

2.6 PERPETUATION OF GENDER INEQUITY IN SCHOOL

Stereotyping of girls and boys is reinforced unconsciously by teachers from pre-school throughout the school system (Acker, 1989:111; Porter, 1988:59; Streitmatter, 1994:54f; Wilkinson & Marret 1985:26-27).

It is written that teachers are unaware of their gender-based actions because these are "unintentional". Teachers "deny" that they actually perpetuate gender bias in schools although it is "rampant" in their classrooms as research has found out. Teachers need gender awareness courses for them to be able to practice teaching fairly.

Girls are differentiated from boys by their names, colours of clothes and dress code. Their separation encourages "oppositional" gender relations and "polarisation" (Thorne, 1993:107). This situation creates a problem of rivalry

between the sexes and it needs to be challenged and corrected in school.

Measor and Sikes (1992: 50-69) have discussed gender construction from home through to school. Issues seen to be contributing to the perpetuation of gender inequity include the organisation of schools, language, learning materials, extra-mural activities, play and the curriculum. An awareness of how these issues add to gender differentiation is needed in schools. Streitmatter (1994:90), Mac An Ghail (1994:40), Porter (1988:56) and Askew & Ross (1988:8) found that schools perpetuate gender inequity.

More confirmation to the fact that bias in gender is continued in school was made by Skelton (1985; 1987; 1989 in Siraj-Baltchford, 1993:12) and Parker, Rennie and Fraser (1996:74), particularly with regard to science and mathematics where boys are more than girls in number. It is critical that teachers' role of demystifying these subjects for girls is emphasised in school. Primary schools have a role to play to create an interest in science and mathematics for girls specifically, who have been noted to leave this stream in secondary schools. The curriculum in primary schools is generally the same for both sexes.

Curriculum 2005 and its outcomes-based approach to education has been implemented in the RSA after the country's democratic government in 1994. This new education system is regarded as one that is free of gender discrimination because it is learner-centered. Both girls' and boys' learning needs are met through the outcomes-based education system. Teachers are able to reflect on their practice and can realize gendered behaviour they might have displayed in their interaction with learners. According to Unterhalter (199:26-30), the new curriculum needs strategies that will ensure that a positive change towards gender fairness in education is achieved.

There needs to be a deliberate effort to break down gender bias in teaching without assuming that this will happen without special emphasis. The work of

GETT is a means to making the curriculum gender-fair.

Apart from curriculum issues, the use of bigger space at school is dominated by boys and Wrigley (1992:12f) has named this concept "borderwork". Boys spread out on the school grounds and occupy more space than girls on the school field. Boys and girls tend to occupy different areas of playgrounds at school and in this way separate themselves according to their sex. Teachers have a role to reshape the way learners occupy space at school.

According to Mac an Ghail (1994:114) division of labour at homes has seen girls working to please and to serve others on their way to womanhood. Also, childcare and general domestic work have remained associated with girls and women (Polity Press, 1994:2f). Women have been regarded as "subservient" to men. Patriarchy, which refers to structures that entrench the domination of men over women, has been confronted through the feminist movement, which aimed to make the "experiences" of women known.

Mathabane (1994:343) says that the oppression that is experienced by women through male domination is not limited to South Africa but it happens throughout the globe. He acknowledges that confronting women's issues is a "daunting task" for all societies. In this essay I argue for both men and women to work together to bring about equality.

2.7 SCHOOLS AS CHANGE AGENTS

Education is seen as having a double role of maintaining the status quo and of changing societies (Weiner, 1990:17). The dilemma is based on which of the two roles of education systems supersedes the other. The argument in this essay lies on the premise that education is a tool for promoting equality and democracy.

"Attitudes, norms and values ... are shaped and transmitted by the educational

systems” (Weiner, 1990:17).

I argue that the dualism in the function of the school is not exclusionary. Values, beliefs and norms of society that are upholding the optimum development of learners should be maintained. On the other hand, the school can choose to change those societal practices that are in opposition to, and also limiting the holistic growth of students. I view the school as a dynamic institution with regard to its purpose for social change as well as maintaining good societal values.

Bank & Hall (1997:136) and Mullen (1994:3) have emphasised that schools are not the main sources of inequality in the society and that they should be regarded as agents for changing situations of gender inequality. Teachers should be aware that gender differentiation has already been entrenched prior to coming to school. The enthusiasm of teachers, as well as their convictions, has been regarded as powerful attributes for change in the “genderedness” of schools (Guttentag & Bray, 1976 in Mullen (1994:2).

2.8 THE ROLE OF TEACHERS



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Professional teaching practices imply that teachers need to commit themselves to serving the interest of their learners through reflecting on their practice. Erant (in Torsten & Postlethwaite 1994: 5969) and Murray (1996:723) state that teachers have a professional obligation to review their teaching for the benefit of their learners. The challenge for teachers is to be morally committed and willing to engage themselves in reflective practices in classes. In this way, gender awareness teaching styles and interaction with learners will become a reality.

The Norms and Standards for Educators produced by the Department of Education in South Africa has highlighted the following roles of teachers: mediators, interpreters and designers of learning programmes and materials, leaders, administrators and managers, scholars, researchers and lifelong

learners, community servants, citizens and pastoral caregivers as well as learning area specialists (Department of Education, 1998:53f). Teachers need to develop all-rounder skills in order to meet the challenges of their new roles.

Teachers are regarded as being in a good position to “reinforce” desired behaviours in boys and girls in their classes (Singh, 1994:143). It is important for teachers to understand gender in education and to work towards constructing ways of removing biases in their classrooms. Teachers’ as well as adults’ behaviour have a great influence on children’s perceptions of themselves and others as studies above have confirmed. Consequently, teachers need to be on the alert about the values, attitudes and norms they are transmitting during their interaction with boys and girls.

According to Von Wright (1997:257-265) teachers have a role of changing socialisation of pupils to play. In order for them to perform this task, “self-reflection” of their own “beliefs, choices and strategies” needs to be acquired through constant effort. There is a great need for teachers to have self-awareness regarding gender in their own lives.

Interaction with teachers facilitates independence in boys and girls in school. Research has confirmed that teachers give more attention to boys as they get more disciplined than girls. Such frequent contact with teachers is an advantage to boys over girls in the class (Porter, 1988:16, 60, 99; Wilkinson & Marret, 1985:3). Classroom interaction should be spread evenly to all pupils.

Teachers should demonstrate high expectation of performance from all learners and interact equally with them. It is further stated that one characteristic of good teaching is when it is done for all children. This American ideal does apply to learners in other parts of the world (Young & Edwards, 1991, in Murray, 1996:438f).

2.9 IN-SERVICE TEACHER EDUCATION

This study on gender issues and the views, understandings and awareness of teachers aims to propose the need for INSET on gender in primary schools. The purpose thereof will be to introduce teachers to teaching in a gender-sensitive manner. There is a need in schools in South Africa to implement new policies and legislation. This type of change is referred to as “mandated” change as indicated by Torsten and Postlethwaite (1994:5966F).

Training in gender as Murray (1996:352) and Acker (1989:120) write, can assist in the development of self-awareness for teachers, heads of schools and learners. Such a development in INSET could lead to the generation of a “much more empathetic and understanding society”. Bank and Hall (1997:37, 211) suggest the introduction of teachers’ education programmes to build the capacity of teachers on gender and schools.

Gender training needs to be part and parcel of the thinking in pre-service as well as in-service teacher education. A lack of development in the area of gender and schools will continue the stereotypes about girls and boys (Acker, 1989:114). Gender issues are regarded as cutting across all subject content and process learning.

A permeation model is ideal and very appropriate to gender-awareness-teaching. Close monitoring and evaluation of the implementation of this model can yield results. The success of the permeation model for teacher education in gender in schools will also be dependent on being a thrust and given prominence and regarded as priority (Siraj-Blatchford, 1993:13f).

I argue for a permeation model to be applied in pre-service and in-service teacher education as opposed to offering a separate module which may be ‘squeezed out’ if it is regarded as not of high priority.

Bank & Hall (1997:35) discuss the need for gender policies in education. They differentiate between 'coercive', 'supportive' and 'constructive' gender policies. The South African government has followed the supportive model for gender policies by creating the environment for equality in the constitution, establishing the CGE and also by appointing officials as focal persons of gender in all departments as proposed by Mac Gregor (1997:35). It is of utmost importance for schools to develop a whole-school policy that will be implemented like the permeation model.

Everybody in the school needs to take ownership of the process of change. The dilemma for Ruddock (1994:116) is the uncertainty that she realises regarding the parents of the learners in supporting such an initiative. My argument is that parents need to be part of this process and SGB's are an important link between the school and the parent community (Gauteng Department of Education, 1997:11-21).

2.10 CONCLUSION



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The section on a review of related literature on gender equity in primary schools has exposed many areas of inequity in education. The school and its teachers have a role to play to change the situation.

In-service education has been suggested as a way in which teachers can become knowledgeable and aware of gender-bias in schools. Establishment of policies to confront inequity in schools has also been proposed to guide the process.

SECTION THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of section three of this research essay is to examine the views of teachers on gender equity in primary schools. Of importance to this study is also the teachers' understanding of gender issues and their awareness thereof. This qualitative research study is based on the following themes:

- i. Teachers' understandings of gender equity in education.
- ii. Teachers' experiences of socialisation from home throughout to training colleges.
- iii. Division of labour.
- iv. Groupwork in schools.
- v. Curriculum and the hidden curriculum.
- vi. Learning support materials.
- vii. Teachers' interaction with learners.
- viii. Gender INSET.

This section encompasses the following subheadings:

- context within which the research is conducted
- the research plan
- sampling procedures
- data collection and its analysis.

3.2 THE CONTEXT OF THE INQUIRY

The Gauteng Department of Education, one of the nine education departments in the new South Africa, has produced a gender policy. This gender policy is in line with the government's policies of non-discrimination as stated in the constitution (Republic of South Africa, 1996:7).

The Gauteng Department of Education (GDE) has formed a gender forum of one representative in each of the eighteen districts. The Gender Forum is coordinated by a focal point appointee at the department's head office, who deals with equity and access issues. The forum meetings are held once a month since 1997.

Members of the GDE gender forum are officials in the districts. They were either asked to attend meetings, and then got interested, or volunteered to participate in the forum. No specific criteria were set for membership. These officials are people employed to do other work.

Attendance at meetings of the forum is not always possible for all members. Sometimes representation from districts changes from one person to another. I represent District C4, which is located in the Johannesburg Region. I am the only person from this district who attends these meetings. The structure of the GDE forum meetings was changed in 1998. Three clusters were identified, namely, Johannesburg, Pretoria and the Vaal Triangle. Each cluster arranged to meet on a monthly basis.

The first Johannesburg cluster meeting was held at District C4 offices. I had by then shared information about gender in education with the personnel in the district and a gender committee was formed with two representatives from each section. Most of the committee members attended this first cluster meeting where gender awareness in schools and in the workplace was discussed. Although this

workshop was a success, it became apparent that gender matters take the backseat as soon as other engagements regarded as of higher priority come up.

The struggle of putting gender on the agenda reached a milestone in District C4 when school-based representatives joined the forum, forming a second tier. An advocacy campaign was effected where the management of schools was addressed on the need for gender equity in schools. This campaign culminated in all schools electing two representatives, one male and the other female.

District C4 comprises the following areas, Diepkloof and Meadowlands in Soweto, Bosmont, Riverlea, Westbury, Noordgesig, Newlands, Fairlands, Coronation, Northcliff and Auckland Park. I have chosen to research gender equity in primary schools, having noted discussions with school-based forum members and the need for debating the issue. I chose to do research in Diepkloof. There are twenty-seven primary schools in the area. Talking about gender with young learners should help them to make informed choices.

Four schools were involved in the research. Focus group interviews were conducted at these four schools. Principals participated in the discussion together with their staff in two of the focus groups.

Observations were done at all four schools where focus group interviews were conducted. Participant observation was done in different grades. The majority of teachers in primary schools are female. There were only three male teachers spread in two focus groups, with the other group having only female participants. Of the four schools I researched, one has a male principal.

3.3 THE RESEARCH PLAN

The study on teachers' views on gender equity in primary schools is classified as qualitative research. This type of research affords the researcher the space to

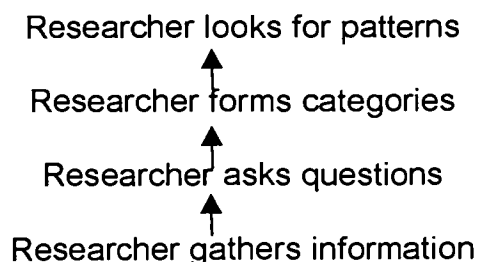
interact with those being studied, unlike in quantitative research. In qualitative research, the researcher is not “distant and independent from that being researched” (Creswell, 1994:6f). Language used in qualitative research is personal unlike with the quantitative research methods. I applied the critical ethnographic theoretical model in the study of gender issues.

The ethnography model integrates the researcher and researched and maintains that meaning is socially constructed and changes because reality is not a fixed phenomenon (Le Compte & Preissle, 1993:129). I regard gender in the same way as confirmed by the statement above, that it is socially constructed. I also see the need to apply critical theory, because it holds that human agency is important for their own emancipation. Critical theory deals with concepts that are associated with gender inequity, such as domination and subordination. The combination of the two theories, ethnography and critical theories inform my stance to this research.

According to Creswell (1994:94), qualitative research methodology applies inductive reasoning. Findings do not follow from a theory prior to the research as in the deductive model used in quantitative studies. Rather, the patterns following from the research inform the theory. Figure 3.1 below illustrates the pattern theory that is followed in this research.

Figure 3.1: The inductive model of research in a qualitative study (Creswell 1994:96)

Researcher develops a theory or compares patterns with other theories.



3.4 SAMPLING PROCEDURES

A sample is regarded as a part of a population that is considered to be representative thereof (De Vos, 1998:19f). A population delimits the scope of the research. The population of this particular study includes all the primary schools in Diepkloof, Soweto. There are twenty-seven primary schools, two of which are privately owned. The total number of teachers of primary schools in the area is three hundred and nineteen.

A sample is defined as “the element of the population considered for actual inclusion in the study” as Arkwa and Lane (1983:27 in De Vos, 1998:19f) confirmed. The aim of studying the sample is to be able to understand the population from which it is drawn. There are two main types of procedures in sampling, namely probability, which is based on “randomisation” and non-probability sampling. Non-probability sampling is not based on randomisation.

This study is based on simple random sampling, which involves giving every item an equal chance of being drawn to participate. I wrote all the names of different primary schools in Diepkloof, on pieces of paper. I folded them and put them in a box. After vigorous shaking, I drew four names of schools through a small opening in the box. Two schools belonged to zone two and the others to zone four in Diepkloof. Table 1, below, illustrates the sample:

Table 3.1: Sample

School	Place: Diepkloof	Number of Teachers	Principal
A	Zone 2	11 Females & 3 Males	Male
B	Zone 2	19 Females	Female
C	Zone 4	7 Females & 1 Male	Female
D	Zone 4	13 Females	Female

The schools are basically homogeneous, situated in the same locality with similar social conditions. All the primary schools have a majority of female teachers. Headship at primary schools in Diepkloof is dominated by females. Only 29,6% are male principals in these schools. The sampling was completed on 15 September 1999, a week before the spring vacation for schools. A schedule to conduct focus groups with the four sampled schools was finalised for the study to begin soon after re-opening. The initial dates to conduct research from 4 October 1999 to 11 October 1999 were changed by the four schools wanting to settle down after the holidays. Data collection started on 11 October 1999.

3.5 DATA COLLECTION

Table 3.2 illustrates the programme for data collection, which began on 6 October 1999.

Table 3.2: Data collection schedule

	Date	Time	Place	Total Number of Teachers	Female	Male
A	11	13:30-16:00	Diepkloof	14	11	3
B	12	14:00-16:00	Diepkloof	19	19	-
C	13	13:30-16:00	Diepkloof	08	07	1
D	6	9:00-14:00	Diepkloof	13	13	-
			Totals	41	37	4

3.5.1. Focus group interview

The focus group interview is a qualitative data-collection method. The focus is on a particular topic and the interviewer acts as a facilitator of the group with minimal interruption. It is an interview method because the researcher is a guide in the discussion (De Vos, 1998:314).

The participants in the focus groups were the teaching staff at primary schools. All the participants were familiar with one another. According to Miles and Huberman (1994:265) researchers have an effect on the research as “insider” or “outsider”. I am a researcher with an “insider” status from the point of view of being an official at the GDE District C4, which caters for all Diepkloof schools. This researcher status assisted in encouraging participation in study.

I am an insider also with regard to having taught in the same area and having worked with most of the participants in adult education in Diepkloof. I also felt like an insider when all the participants were female or predominantly so. My official



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position in the GDE might have been limiting and could easily have rendered me an “outsider” on the other hand, because officers represent the employer. This limitation was not a barrier to the discussions because the gender issues topic is one that applies directly to people’s lives.

The sizes of the four groups varied depending on the number of teachers on the staff. De Vos (1998:317) suggests that the ideal size of focus groups is less than twelve people. It was not possible to divide the staff into two groups where there were fourteen or nineteen participants.

These focus group interviews were preceded by the gender forum work that I perform for the GDE. Basically, one or two teachers in the group had been in meetings of awareness in gender prior to the group. These gender forum representatives’ role is to cascade all information discussed at meetings and to facilitate gender-free teaching.

The research is a way of also supporting the work of the gender representatives and also to monitor progress on the issue. This research is based on action. The group interviews took place at the various schools. There is need to see an improvement regarding gender awareness in schools. The participants in all four focus groups were homogeneous which made the use of time profitable. Appendix C shows a record of data collection.

3.5.2 Participant observation

Participant observation took place on 12.10.1999 to 13.10.1999 at schools A, B, C and D. I asked teachers to invite me to their classes. The principals of school C and D had arranged for any classes to be visited. The aim of the participant observation is to get first-hand information on the subjects in their own natural setting. It is regarded as the main data collection method applied by ethnographers (Le Compte & Preissle, 1993:195f).

Observation through participating involves “watching, listening, asking questions”. School ethnographers have found out that teachers talk about what is “acceptable” practice, so it is important for researchers to see for themselves what really happens in the classroom (Le Compte & Preissle, 1993:196). I have included the participant observation schedule in Appendix B.

Teachers visited during the research were appreciative of my presence at the school, although I observed how I could have affected their interaction with learners. Teachers were inclined to recognise girls in various activities.

Being mostly female teachers and their experiences of their own socialisation and general disadvantage because of their sex, it was not surprising when they affirmed girls more. This was in my view, a deliberate effort to show how girls are treated at school.

Teachers were made aware that I was in their classes to study gender in classrooms and in the school generally, and this prior knowledge had an effect on their behaviour. There was a concerted effort from teachers to recognise all learners in their interaction with them. Boys were indeed more reprimanded for naughtiness than girls were. It is encouraging that girls at this level are vibrant and very active in class. Girls in grade four at school D were very assertive. They were planning for a surprise celebration in honour of teachers on the Worlds’ Teachers’ Day. Girls were leading in the discussion with their teacher to plan for the event. Boys were more in the background and they waited to be asked to respond or to contribute to the discussion.

The principal of the school was doing her normal walkabouts when she was drawn into the discussion. Girls again talked to her in very friendly terms and trusting the principal and their class teacher not to tell other teachers about the surprise party. It was amazing how girls at primary schools assert themselves,

yet are suppressed and dominated by men in later lives.

The primary school teacher has a challenging role to play to facilitate development of the potential in girls. Gender biases can eventually be removed and girls could continue throughout life being like they are in primary schools, assertive, vibrant and confident. Boys on the other hand need teachers to intervene for them to concentrate on class-work and not to be naughty instead. Boys get attention from teachers, in most of the cases, because they were not concentrating on the work. Now and again they caught the teachers' attention with their troublesome actions in class.

This behaviour that I observed in boys should be attended to in primary school. Mechanisms should be found in order that naughtiness displayed by boys could be removed.

I visited a remedial class in school C. Learners in this class came from different grades in the school. They were referred to this class so that assistance is provided to them to be able to cope with learning in their own grades. Children go back to their respective grades as soon as it is ascertained that they have shown an improvement with their lessons.

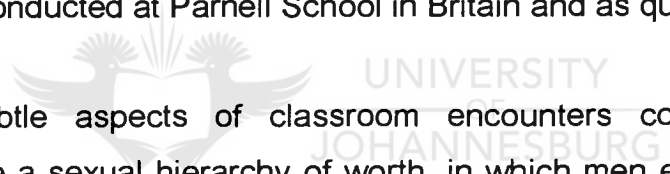
There were nine boys and three girls in the remedial class. More boys were found in the remedial class because they are the ones who were uncontrollable in their grades and caused disruptions. Fewer girls displayed this behaviour. Teachers' equitable approach to gender equity is suggested so that boys are afforded the necessary corrective measures for their behaviour in the early years of schooling.

Confronting these signs of bullying behaviour in boys might eventually result in a society that understands that men and women do not have any significant differences as stated by the Women's College Coalition in conjunction with the

Ad Council ([http:// www. academic. org/](http://www.academic.org/)).

It has been confirmed that girls and boys have the same capacity to succeed in reading, writing, mathematics and in sports if they are afforded the same attention at home and at school. Parents are noted as having a great influence on their children's lives and choices ([http:// www. academic. org/](http://www.academic.org/)). This suggests that teachers working with parents, eventually, might assist one another in bringing about the change towards a gender-fair society.

Curriculum 2005 is being implemented in grades one and two. Teachers have been prepared for the introduction of outcomes based education in grade three. A lot of activity happens in the classes visited. The arrangement of the furniture in the class encourages interaction. Learners are seated in groups and the furniture is organised accordingly. Girls are talkative in groups. Boys bully girls. This bullying by boys could be leading to the construction of masculinity as noted in a research study conducted at Parnell School in Britain and as quoted below:



'Fairly subtle aspects of classroom encounters continued to regenerate a sexual hierarchy of worth, in which men emerged as the "naturally" dominant sex' (Stanworth, 1981:23 in Mac an Ghail, 1994:173).

Groupings that are initiated by learners themselves have shown another dimension from those organised by teachers. Girls preferred to partner with girls in a computer literacy class that I visited in school C. Boys were together in pairs, working on computers. Single sex pairs of learners working together on a task are encouraged as seen in the GDE gender policy (GDE, 1999:7).

These single sex groupings that learners are inclined to form when given a chance to group themselves show that they have a contribution to make in a classroom and in the whole school (Riseborough, 1985:209 in Mac an Ghail,

1994:179).

Learners are active participants in the construction of knowledge in the classroom. Prior socialisation and the role of their parents in their upbringing have influence on their classroom interaction with one another.

The research conducted at Parnell school in Britain found that teachers are not the only ones that help construct knowledge in the classroom. Learners too have an important role to play in knowledge creation. I argue for emancipatory constructivism as a method for degendering classrooms. Teachers, nevertheless, have a facilitating role in guiding the generation of knowledge that will be liberating to their learners.

Lining up for assembly in school is done according to grades, although it is sex segregated. Girls and boys form different lines. The rows of children are mixed with girls alternating positions with boys. This is deceiving because there is sex-discrimination in the line up. The columns show that boys and girls from different lines in the same grade.

3.6. DATA ANALYSIS

In analysing the data in this research, I adopted categories of Patton (1990b *in* Le Compte & Preissle, 1993:171f) namely, questions on experience and behaviour, opinion and value, feelings, knowledge, sensory and background. This model is appropriate to the research question and sub-questions of this study on views of teachers on gender equity in primary schools.

The open coding method of analysing the data was used. I took the transcripts of the focus group interviews and participant observations and checked out for themes that occurred frequently (De Vos, 1998:273). The themes or final categories of the data are discussed in this section.

Analysis of Data collected through focus group interviews and participant observation is discussed below:

3.6.1 Teachers' understanding of gender equity in education

Researcher's question: How do you understand the word gender?

Teachers' Responses: A general understanding was communicated. Concepts like equality, men, women, sex, imbalance and oppression of women by men were discussed. In the group where there were no men, all were in agreement about how women are subservient even though the new constitution says all are equal. They agreed that equality is not easy because men seemed comfortable with the inequality. The struggle for equality, they agreed, is lip service. There is no effort from men to change. Some agreed that women are not assertive enough.

3.6.2 Teachers' gender socialisation from home throughout to college

Researcher's question: How were boys and girls treated at home?

Interpretation of Teachers' Responses: Some gave deep sighs before answering. Female teachers were outspoken about their treatment at home as girls growing up. Fathers did not have much regard for girls in the home. The names, which were given to boys, meant that they would inherit whatever the family possessed and would also continue the family name. Girls' names included meanings like "yet another girl".

Female teachers expressed how they were oppressed as girls growing up with boys at home. They were taught caring for their siblings very early in their lives. They learnt home chores of cleaning and cooking whilst boys were left to play in

the street. Male teachers defended this position because they regarded it as their culture and also as part of religion.

Teachers looked back with disgruntlement although they acknowledged that in those times nothing seemed wrong with unequal treatment between boys and girls by parents. Two younger teachers seemed to have a difference of opinion about how they were socialised. They said their situation was better specifically because their parents were teachers themselves. This view was not applicable to the majority in the group. Most agreed that their mothers had no say at home. She was the subordinate one. It was normal to see this type of power relations between mothers and fathers at homes.

Researcher's question: How were boys and girls treated in primary school?

Teachers' responses: There was an almost overwhelming response that things were not different from home. Girls cleaned whilst boys played outside, or cleared the surrounding. Boys were the naughty ones who were always in trouble with the teacher, thus getting teachers' attention all the time.

3.6.3 Division of labour

Both girls and boys cleaned the classroom. There are some chores that are sex-differentiated, like moving heavy objects which is done by boys.

3.6.4. Groupwork in school

Boys occupied the whole space. Girls clustered in limited space whilst boys ran around playing with one another. Play was sex-differentiated by the learners

themselves. This needed intervention.

3.6.5. Curriculum and the hidden curriculum

Researcher's question: What subjects were offered for boys and girls in school in those days?

Teachers' response: There was not much of a division at this level except for sewing for girls and gardening for boys. Most teachers were female.

Researcher's question: What was the situation like in high school regarding gender?

Teachers' Responses: The situation was worse at secondary school. Boys were outspoken. Girls became shy and afraid of boys. Teachers were mostly male and not so caring like in primary school. The dichotomy between sexes became emphasized. Subjects like home economics were strictly for girls and agricultural studies was done by boys only. More boys participated in sports, mainly soccer, and basketball and netball for girls. Girls uniform was stifling for sport participation.

Curriculum 2005 posters were generally displayed on walls. In two classes visited, there were days of the week written on drawings of seven paper dresses hanged like washing on a washing-line. The symbolic message to me was girls do the washing. Pictures of an executive man in a suit and with a briefcase were displayed alongside a woman in an apron with a baking sheet held with both hands. The woman is portrayed as domesticated.

All children in primary do the same school subjects. Teachers agree that boys do well in mathematics and science and girls in reading. There are no strategies to address this situation.

3.6.6 Learning support materials

The African literature learners read started with a story about a woman referred to as “mother”. All the children who read for me, never selected this first story. The popular story for both girls and boys was the one about “father”. The picture of the mother with a baby on her back was indicative of the woman’s caring role. Teachers need to know how to select materials and also to interpret what is portrayed in the books existing in school.

3.6.7 Teachers’ interaction with learners

Researcher's question: Do you think you interact with one gender of students more often than the other?

Teachers’ responses: Teachers agreed that they treat children the same way. They emphasised grouping them across gender and letting all of them clean the classes.

Researcher probes: If you wanted your heavy table to be moved to another position, who would you ask for help?

Teachers’ responses: They all laughed saying “four big boys” or “four strong boys”. At this stage teachers agreed that there are things they do unintentionally because of their own socialisation. They agreed that they would send boys to shops and not girls. Also, girls

would be asked for water and for cleaning the teachers table.

Researcher's question: Do you think there is need to change gender imbalances at school?

Teachers' response: An unanimous agreement was sounded, although they agreed that it is a difficult problem to solve. They were concerned about the role of the parents in the matter as well as their own awareness. They agreed that training should be sought for successful implementation of gender equity in schools.

I felt that the researcher effect was impacting on the interaction between teachers and pupils. Girls were generally very lively and wanted to be recognised for responses to questions. Teachers made a real effort to balance out on responses from learners, although the boys were slightly ignored until when they had to be disciplined. Learners read either in English or in an African language most of the time. Teachers asked children to read for me and I appraised and encouraged them. More girls than boys were asked to read. Some boys struggled along with the reading. In all the classes visited, girls were asked to be the teachers and to lead in a reading lesson. They did very well. Boys were not asked.

3.6.8 Gender INSET

No training in gender awareness has been provided. Teachers need to be able to be gender sensitive in their work with learners in the school. Participant teachers articulated the need for gender INSET in primary schools so that

strategies for improving gendered classroom practices are developed.

3.7 CONCLUSION

Data collection methods applied in this research are focus group interviews and participant observation. Critical ethnography in qualitative research is the stance I adopted for the study because of its emancipatory function in issues of injustice such as gender inequity in schools. A narration of the teachers' responses was given in analysing the data.



SECTION FOUR

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS AND

IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY

4.1. INTRODUCTION

Section four of this essay discusses the findings of the research. Teachers' views on gender equity in primary schools have confirmed my claim that there is a need for a deeper understanding of these issues. More knowledge is required so that strategies for confronting gender inequity in schools can be developed. INSET is suggested as a way towards achieving the goal of equality.

4.2 OVERVIEW OF SECTION FOUR

This section comprises the following subheadings:

- Discussion of the final categories.
- Strengths and weaknesses of the study.
- Implications of the inquiry.
- Conclusion.

4.3 DISCUSSION OF FINAL CATEGORIES

I refer to the findings as mentioned in Section three (See paragraph 3.6).

4.3.1 Teachers' understanding of gender equity in education

Discussions on gender in education are new in the new democracy of the RSA.

The constitution's clause on the elimination of all forms of discrimination, which includes gender, is well understood by teachers. I found teachers to have a reasonable understanding of the general issues surrounding imbalances in relation to men and women in their society.

Most of the teachers in primary schools are female. They communicated deep feelings about their experiences of gender discrimination in their own lives. I found that there was a lack of knowledge in relation to ways of improving on the gender situation that occurs in the school and in their classrooms. Their gendered behaviour seemed engrained in them and without any intentions to segregate girls from boys, this happens. I found the extent of teachers' understanding of gender equity to be limited to a few deliberate actions to equalise opportunities between boys and girls and to mix both sexes in groups.

4.3.2 Teachers' socialisation from home throughout to training college

Teachers had been initiated into the values, norms and beliefs of their communities. Beliefs regarding men's superiority were entrenched from home where the father played a dominant and powerful role. Teachers were part of a society that regarded women as minors and as weak and dependent on men for major decision-making and economic resources.

This position of women as housekeepers and generally caring for the well being of their children, extended families and husbands has formed a large part of how teachers were socialised. Male teachers were defensive of this situation. They were vocal about how culture and religion have a bearing on gender issues at home and in communities. They also emphasised that men and women are equal according to the constitution of South Africa, although the practice thereof is not easy.

The unequal power relations between boys and girls were continued in school

throughout to colleges of education. Teachers agreed that they find themselves in a situation that has been accepted as the norm for a long time. According to Wilkinson and Marret (1985:26-27), unintentional, unconscious as well as spontaneous gendered behaviour occur in teachers' daily interactions with children, colleagues and parents.

This situation is taken for granted as normal whilst the injustices experienced through socialisation at homes, schools and colleges were well articulated by teachers. I got a sense of helplessness communicated regarding what should be done. Some initiatives such as mixing boys and girls in groups and letting them keep the classroom clean were an indication of efforts to deconstruct the entrenched gendered practices and to create a new culture of division of labour.

4.3.3 Division of labour

Allocating duties according to sex differences is one area that teachers have reconstructed. There is a superficial turnabout of a situation where girls clean and boys play as is generally the case at home. Teachers and the schools have made it clear to me that all boys and girls sweep classrooms. This is a step towards confronting differentiated division of labour in school.

Other subtle roles are unintentionally still performed according to sex discrimination, for example cleaning teachers' tables is done by girls, whilst boys are asked to pick up heavy boxes and moving furniture. Boys are still regarded as strong and girls as weak and caring. It is these subtle actions of teachers that should be reflected upon and confronted.

Teachers' committees in primary schools are led by females. There are, if any, only a small number of male teachers in primary schools. Schools have committees for sport and culture, discipline, catering, to name some. It is interesting to note that the convenor of the catering committee at one school is a

man. Convenorship is a leadership position and I found it commensurate with men holding management positions in bigger numbers in schools than women. Women are the ones who play an active role in the catering committee mentioned. The sports committee is another area where males dominate except where there are none on the staff. Primary schools have a lot of space for women to participate in all roles although male teachers find dominant roles in one area or the other even if they are in the minority.

4.3.4 Groupwork in schools

Classrooms in primary schools are now permanently arranged to encourage groupwork. Groupings are formed by boys and girls together. However, according to Wrigley (1992:12f), the space occupied by learners during playtime shows that boys dominate a greater part of the fields than girls. Boys seem more eager to run around and to spread. The groupings outside of classrooms are voluntary and girls cluster together with other girls as do boys. This differential use of space has been referred to as "borderwork" in Wrigley (1992:12f). Teachers need to be aware of the use of space in school so that girls are aware of the need to venture into bigger spaces and face the challenges of unknown territories.

4.3.5 Curriculum and the hidden curriculum

Children are taught the same subjects in primary school. Sex-segregated offerings are more prevalent in secondary schools. The primary school teachers' roles are to ensure that both girls and boys are offered a strong foundation for them to continue with subjects of their choice in secondary schools. This can be achieved with an equitable approach to gender equality for boys to read well and girls to enjoy mathematics and science as stated by Streitmatter (1994:8f).

Unterhalter (1999:26-30) has mentioned that there is a need for Curriculum 2005

to have mechanisms for gender-free teaching and learning practices. She holds that it cannot be assumed that the new curriculum is in and of itself gender free. This outlook to the new curriculum is misleading in that by mere mixing boys and girls in groups, teachers believe that gendered behaviour is removed. There is need to know what happens in those groupings. Through the hidden curriculum, strong and powerful messages are communicated to learners without teachers being aware thereof. Reflective teaching practice is a way of confronting this situation of unintentional gendered actions that form a greater part of the hidden curriculum that influences learners' behaviours.

4.3.6. Learning support materials

Choices regarding learning support materials need to be informed by the new approaches to education. Teachers are using materials that are gender-biased. It is the role of the teacher to be aware of content depicted through pictures and narration and to interpret it. Teachers need skills of selection and developing of materials. These skills will assist them in applying gender-awareness teaching in their classrooms (Measor & Sikes, 1992:55f).

4.3.7. Teachers' interaction with learners

A great deal of effort is shown regarding equal recognition and acknowledgement of both boys' and girls' input. Boys continue to get more of teachers' attention and interaction when they get disciplined. Mechanisms to control boys' bullying and naughty behaviour are needed so that they get equal attention as girls from the teacher. Teachers need to make an effort to affirm girls more with regard to interaction in the classroom (Sutherland, 1999:48).

4.3.8 Gender INSET

Teachers agreed that there is a need to be trained in gender awareness

teaching practices.

4.4 STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES OF THE STUDY

The study is focused on primary schools in Diepkloof, Soweto. Diepkloof is a place of residence where basically only black people stay, the majority of whom live in poor conditions. It is a typical township location and what happens in education in primary schools in the area could be same as in other townships. This similarity with other black townships is a strength that I find with the study. The findings can thus be taken to be applicable to other areas with the same conditions.

The researcher-effect constituted a limitation of the study. The “insider” and “outsider” effects of myself as one charged with the role of implementing gender equity in education in schools in Diepkloof, had an effect on participation. Teachers were more inclined to being collaborative. Not all schools in the area participated in the study. A random sample was selected.

4.5 IMPLICATIONS OF THE INQUIRY

- The findings of the research clearly show that teachers have some understanding of gender issues. Teachers, however, need a deeper understanding of issues of gender in the classroom and in school generally.
- A permeation model for gender equity awareness in teaching is strongly suggested so that all teachers reflect on their practice in all subjects. INSET is needed for teachers to construct new ways of teaching that are gender sensitive. Self-awareness is critical in this matter.
- Gender awareness teaching has the capacity to be broadened to the

children's homes. In this way the school and teachers become forceful agents of social change.

- The curriculum should be accessible to all learners. Equitable treatment of learners depending on a specified need should be applied so that working towards equality is achieved. Subjects like mathematics and science should be taught in such a way that girls continue with them long after primary schools.
- Learning support materials should be selected with care. Teachers need to develop critical analysing skills when choosing, using, as well as developing support materials. The genderedness of materials should be exposed to the learners so that they too, develop a gender free outlook to life.
- A wider variety of extra-curricular activities for all children is needed in schools. Girls need to be encouraged to participate in school sport. The attire should be comfortable for them to participate fully in the field space provided in school.
- Through teachers' actions, school organisation, interaction and "conscientisation" of parents on gender matters, inequalities will eventually be removed in society.
- A need for the development of school gender policies was pointed out so that all stakeholders participate in the elimination of gender discrimination in school and society. All stakeholders should be involved in the policy formulation process.

4.6 CONCLUSION

The research study has established that there is a need for strategies to be developed in confronting the long entrenched gender biases in education. Understanding gender in education is still very superficial and as new ground, it is fertile for bearing fruit for individual learners, teachers and the whole society. Confronting gender inequity in primary schools is not an event. It will take a lot of effort, self-awareness, reflection and persistence on the part of teachers, schools, education departments and the whole society for equality to be achieved.

This research advocates for an equitable framework to approach gender equality in schools. Sex discrimination has been argued against in this research. Gender differentiation is however, sometimes beneficial in cases where boys or girls are afforded their own space to perform to the optimum (Gauteng Department of Education, 1999:7). Primary schools do not show much need for single sex groupings.



Teachers felt the need for training on gender discrimination-free classroom practices. This study proposes mainstreaming of gender awareness in school through a permeation model. Support for the implementation of gender equity in schools has been provided through the state's commitment to equality and the emancipation of women. A school policy on gender will further provide an enablement for teachers to practise gender-fair teaching.

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6. APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

GENDER EQUITY IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

1. Teachers' understanding of gender equity in education

- 1.1 How do you understand the word gender?
- 1.2 How does gender differ from sex?
- 1.3 What comes to mind when you hear about the word equity?

2. Teachers' socialisation from home throughout to college

- 2.1 Looking back how were boys and girls treated in primary school?
- 2.2 What were the experiences of boys and girls in secondary school?
- 2.3 What subjects were offered for boys and girls when you were in school?
- 2.4 Was any training in gender offered during pre-service teacher education?
- 2.5 Do you think your own socialisation has an influence on how you interact with learners?

3 Division of labour

- 3.1 If you wanted a table to be moved to another position, who would you ask?
- 3.2 Who would you ask to clean your table and chair?
- 3.3 How is your classroom kept clean?

4 Groupwork in school

- 4.1 How are learners grouped in class?
- 4.2 How do learners group themselves during playtime?

5 Curriculum

- 5.1 What subjects are offered in your school?
- 5.2 How do the learners perform in reading?
- 5.3 How do boys and girls perform in Mathematics and Science?
- 5.4 What extra-mural activities do learners participate in?

6. Learning Support Materials

- 6.1 What do you think about the support materials used in school?
- 6.2 Do you think teachers have a role to play regarding the interpretation of learning materials?

7. Teachers' interaction with learners

- 7.1 Do you find all learners participate fully in class.
- 7.2 Are there discipline concerns in your classroom?
- 7.3. Does bullying exist in your class?

8. Gender INSET

- 8.1 What is your opinion on INSET?
- 8.2 Is training on gender awareness provided for teachers?
- 8.3 Is INSET on gender awareness necessary for teachers in primary schools?

APPENDIX B

GENDER EQUITY IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS

PARTICIPANT OBSERVATION SCHEDULE

1. Teacher-Pupil Classroom Interaction
2. Division of labour
3. Learning Support Materials
4. Curriculum in school
5. Extracurricular activities
6. Pictures and Posters
7. Play
8. Discipline in class
9. Reading
10. Attendance Register organisation



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APPENDIX C

TRANSCRIPTS

FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEWS

Theme 1: Teachers' understanding of gender equity in education

Question: What is your understanding of the word gender?

T1: Gender refers to men and women.

T2: I think gender means behaviour, that is, how we behave towards one another.

T3: Gender means there is no equality between men and women. Our culture as well as our religion suggest that men are more powerful than women. So, there is no equality.

T4: What about the new constitution? Okay, we are not the same with men, but the constitution says that we are equal.

T5: My view is that we are equal only on paper, and not in reality. It is the duty of women to assert themselves. They still allow unequal treatment.

T6: I think gender means women. Every time when people talk about women's rights, men associate it with Beijing. Women must exercise their rights. They must not be afraid that men will say it is Beijing again.

T7: Men are too dominant. They like to suppress women. Yes, in the past that happened without women questioning it, now women can talk.

Question: Do you think there is a difference between sex and gender?

T3: No, they are the same. They refer to men and women.

T5: I also think they are the same. Both refer to male and female, because the difference between men and women is their sex.

T8: I think sex is the difference between men and women. Women fall pregnant and men don't. Their sexes and their gender is different. Sex cannot be changed. Their roles cannot be changed.

Question: What comes to your mind when you hear about the word equity?

T8: Equity is redress. The disadvantaged need to be redressed.

T2: Equity means equality. There is no equality between the sexes.

T6: Equity suggests that things need to be equalised. So, I don't think means equality. It means unequal. Men and women are not equal.

T7: Yes, I agree with you, equity means there is an imbalance. Men dominate women. Men used to get higher salaries than women doing the same type of work, until the government introduced parity for all teachers.

T8: Yes, for example, female teachers could not own subsidised houses. Only males could get subsidised houses by the department. Now, it is better. Women were regarded as minors, like children.

Theme 2: Teachers' socialisation from home throughout to college.

Question: Looking back, how were girls and boys treated?

- T2: Girls had to look after the home. Cleaning, cooking and doing the washing was the girl's role. Boys were shepherds in the rural areas, but in the townships, they were not given work.
- T3: It is better now. Girls and boys are required to clean, even at school. We are treating our learners in the same way. They are all equal. We do not discriminate against girls.
- T4: I remember my father gave my only brother a name that meant that he was going to be the heir. The two girls in the home were not considered. Everything was about the greatness of the boy. How unfair it was.
- T6: Yes, our names were given meanings that did not matter regarding power and strength. Women were not regarded in any way. Even the mother in the home was ill-treated. She was subservient. She could not eat the tasty parts of a chicken or eggs. Eggs were for the father only.
- T2: Teachers at school were not different from the treatment received at home. Boys and girls did different chores. Girls did more work in keeping schools clean.
- T3: Even our training at colleges continued with boys and girls doing different work. Sewing was done by girls whilst boys did gardening. The boys also weaved mats. There was no choice provided.
- T4: I think it will be difficult to change the situation. Boys and girls will always be treated the same like before. We are trying to group them across sexes

here in school, but what happens at home? The parents treat them the way they were brought up themselves. Parents are undoing what we as teachers are doing, mixing them and letting them clean their classes together.

T7: Most fathers are still traditional. Although they do not complain about their sons cleaning, I am not sure how they view this issue about equality.

Theme 3: Division of labour

This theme has been covered in the discussion on socialisation above.

Theme 4: Group work in school

This theme has been addressed in the theme on socialisation.

Theme 5: Curriculum and the hidden curriculum

Question: What subjects are offered in your school?

T3: Subjects are the same in school. Children do not have a choice. They only choose when they go to secondary schools.

T1: Boys used to do gardening and girls sewing. Now these subjects are not offered in school.

T2: We know that men are tailors and women are dressmakers. Men are chefs in hotels as well. So, it means everyone can do what they like.

T3: The thing is people realise much later that men can cook and sew as well.

T4: Men do not cook at home because it is the woman who must care for the family.

T8: We do not find male teachers teaching sewing. Or cooking or baking.

Question: How do boys and girls perform in mathematics and science?

T7: They are the same. All of them do well in Mathematics and science.

T3: I think boys are better in mathematics. Girls do not do so well.

T4: My experience is different. Girls are better in mathematics. Maybe many girls are more gifted than the boys.

T5: Boys like to try out things. They are adventurous that is why they perform better than girls in science. The difference is not so big in primary schools, only in high schools.

T8: Girls excel in reading. They learn to read quicker than boys. Have you all noticed that? I find boys to be slow learners when it comes to reading.

T1: Yes I think that is common in our classes. Girls are fast and good readers. Boys seem to have some problems with reading.

T2: I try to help all of them in the same way, but some of them, especially boys, are very slow to group reading.

Question: What sporting activities do learners participate in?

T3: We have soccer and netball. There are no facilities for tennis. Boys play soccer and girls netball.

T4: I don't think we should have the same sport for boys and girls. They are not the same, so they need different sporting activities.

T4: Yes, look at national soccer. There is no way girls and boys can be the same for sport. Soccer needs muscles and it could be dangerous. We have to protect our girls.

T1: It is not easy to have equality in sports.

Theme 6: Learning support materials

Question: What do you think about learning support materials used in grades?

T1: I think they are very good. OBE has brought new ways of teaching. The books are learner friendly.

T2: The old books are also still being used. They encourage teaching the same old way. We must use new books.

T3: We have been to an exhibition to select books. Publishers displayed their books. We still need to study them so that we finalise our choices for next. The books seem very good.

Theme 7: Teachers' interaction with learners

Question: Do you find that all learners participate fully in class?

T4: Yes, with OBE, learners work in groups. They answer questions because they are all involved.

T6: Girls are the ones who shout the answer. They are more clever than the boys.

T7: Boys are very naughty. I have to always call them to order. Girls are good, they concentrate on their work.

Theme 8: Gender INSET

Question: Do you think Gender INSET is necessary for teachers?

T2: I think we must have more workshops on gender. There are many things that I have learnt today. We need to know what to do so that we can improve this situation especially where parents are involved.

T5: We never received any training on equality. We get it through attending women's clubs, and teachers' union meetings. I think we should be trained on gender. We are already mixing boys and girls in classes. Maybe there are more things we need to do to ensure equality, we don't know.

T6: I think women must learn to speak up.

T7: It is not easy. How do we change the culture at homes. It is still traditional. The churches are worse. Women play minor roles. We do not even have female priests in our churches.

T1: There is some improvement women can be priests now, but I don't think the beliefs about men's superiority will change.

T8: Well we cannot give up. We must continue to talk about these issues. They concern us. Someday it will be better.