

GENDER ISSUES AND CLASSROOM PRACTICE IN NAMIBIAN CLASSROOMS

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A minithesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Magister Educationis in the Faculty of Education, University of the Western Cape.

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ABSTRACT

GENDER ISSUES AND CLASSROOM PRACTICE IN NAMIBIAN CLASSROOMS

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This study investigates the extent to which sexist practices and gender bias are evident in particular Namibian school classrooms. The investigation was carried out at a Combined School in the Ondangwa West Region of Northern Namibia. It focuses on the question of whether teachers hold stereotypical views about the learners they teach and whether teachers can explain what they say and do to girls and boys based on gender.

The investigation used observation of classroom and lesson proceedings, as well as group and individual interviews with Grades 5-7 teachers who teach selected subjects. Observations and interviews focused on soliciting teachers' views and perceptions of their learners in terms of academic performance, characteristics and behaviour.

The data was analysed around common themes from the group interviews, individual interviews and classroom observation.

The study found that teachers at this school hold gender stereotypical views of the learners. Through the tasks they give to learners and how they expect such tasks to be carried out, teachers unconsciously reinforced gender stereotypes. The stereotypes they held about their learners determined the treatment and the nature of the interactions with them. The study concluded with the argument and a recommendation that educating teachers intensively through in-service training initiatives is one of the most important ways to mentor them to act toward a sexism-free classroom environment. Classroom

activities should be a way to empower girls and positively influence them to pick up their position in modern society in which a woman's role is changing.

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DECLARATION

I declare that *Gender Issues and Classroom Practice in Namibian School Classrooms* is my own work, that it has not been submitted for any degree or examination in any other university, and that all the sources I have quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by complete references.

MENETTE N. NAMBALA

NOVEMBER 2001

SIGNED:



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ACRONYMS USED IN THIS DOCUMENT

CEDAW	:	Convention on the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination Against Women
CSO	:	Central Statistics Office
DWA	:	Department of Women Affairs
FAWE	:	Forum for African Women Educationalists in Namibia
FAWENA	:	Forum for African Women Educationalist in Namibia
MBEC	:	Ministry of Basic Education and Culture
MBESC	:	Ministry of Basic Education Sports and Culture
MEC	:	Ministry of Education and Culture
NPC	:	National Planning Commission
UNDP	:	United Nations Development Programme
UNICEF	:	United Nations Children Fund
WAD	:	Women and Development
WID	:	Women in Development



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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION TO GENDER ISSUES AND CLASSROOM PRACTICE

INTRODUCTION

Namibia has a history of discrimination, subordination and oppression of its people on the basis of race, ethnicity and gender. These features are a consequence of the colonial experiences inflicted on it through its occupation, first by Germany from 1884 until the onset of World War I, and later by South Africa between the years 1920 and 1990 (Hune and Singham, 1986). It is not the intention of this chapter to give the political history of Namibia, but rather to refer to features of the colonial practices, which are relevant to the topic of this thesis, namely: gender discriminatory practices in the Namibian education system.

During her occupation of Namibia, South Africa never viewed it as her prime responsibility to develop a formidable education for the black Namibians. Instead, they became part of the Bantu Education system, which by implication meant that the Black population had to receive an inferior education, which had as its purpose to reinforce the subordinate position they were in, compared to their white counterparts. Bantu education was designed for the maintenance and supply of the black labour force for the white employers. This labour force was predominantly male. Consequently it is men who had to receive education, leaving women as home keepers.

In Namibia before independence, gender discrimination was hidden under other forms of discriminatory practices for example race and ethnicity. It was therefore not considered a significant issue. The war of liberation therefore put the emphasis on apartheid and its attributes rather than on gender issues per se. As highlighted earlier, discrimination and oppression affected women most, because they had had very limited or no opportunities for education. Women's limitations also came from the fact that missionaries who were running education during the colonial time, considered men as more in need of education, because of their traditional role of financially providing for their families. Women, on the other hand would then find security in the marriage. According to Auala (1989:74) the few girls who attended

missionary schools were taught needlework, laundering and ironing, which prepared them for domestic chores. It is, however difficult for somebody to clearly draw a line between traditional society's gender expectations and what apartheid reinforced. In Namibia today the traditional society too has its own gender role expectations. The point here is simply that women lagged behind men and boys in terms of educational opportunities.

Evidence of sexism in education has been documented in Namibia, especially after independence in 1990 (Kasanda and Shaimemanya, 1997) and has increasingly become a cause for concern. Girls have been at the margins of every aspect in life, including education. At independence the educational reform has brought new discourses, including the concept of girl-child education (Departement of Women Affairs (DWA), 1998:9). It was also at this time when the new Namibian government framed its intentions of addressing educational inequities based on gender. The policy booklet, *Toward Education for All: A Development Brief for Education, Culture and Training* (MEC, 1992) is evidence of this. The booklet clearly spells out that educational reform should put emphasis on the education of girls, with the aim of achieving equal access to schooling between boys and girls.

Since the introduction of this new policy, the Ministry of Education has been working toward attaining its goal of equity. Today, Namibian enrolment figures demonstrate a gender-balanced pattern. In 1997 females made up more than 50% of all children of school going age who were enrolled in school. The Education Management Information System of the Ministry of Basic Education Sport and Culture (MBESC/EMIS: Namibia, 1997) indicates that in Ondangwa West alone (where this research was conducted) girls made up 52.5% of all learners enrolled in the elementary grades.

Even though the national enrolment figures show the pattern indicated previously, the concern raised in this thesis is that the educational policy document has not pronounced itself as to how sexism in classrooms is to be addressed. There is a need for more policies and programs, which go beyond access, in order to address some of the basic causes of educational disadvantages as may feature in our schools today and which could have a negative impact on the girls' self-esteem (Kasanda and Shaimemanya, 1997).

Looking at the conceptualization of gender issues from a feminist perspective, one would support the argument that the issue of access is only an initial stage (Taylor, 1995). Based on Taylor's argument, in this thesis I see a need to move from equality of educational opportunity to the elimination of sexism, which is found in school classrooms. Sexism, in my view, is a crucial issue and it has a detrimental effect on the life of those whom it affects most, this time the girl-child.

2. THE PROBLEM

Teachers, as an integral part of classroom settings, play a key role in the transmission of gender ideologies. Through everyday actions, notions of femininity and masculinity are shaped, strengthened and transmitted. It was stated in the previous section that Namibia has succeeded in narrowing down the gap between females and males in terms of access to education as a whole. Namibia as a country has managed to bring girls to school in equal numbers with boys. Despite the fact that girls and boys learn in the same school, are taught by the same teachers, and along the same curriculum, showing the same potential, girls continue to receive a different education, the one based on the differences between them and the boys. According to Forum for African Women Educationalists (FAWE, 1999) a pedagogy based on sex differences starts at home, in the community and is transmitted in the classroom. Such pedagogy is guided by gender bias, taking the form of domination, discrimination and continuous stereotyping. This type of pedagogy clearly indicates that girls experience the classroom differently from their male counterparts. One would like to see an education for girls stressing the similarities between them and the boys.

The fact that gender equity reform in terms of schooling has ended at the classroom door, implies that classroom practice, especially the teacher is implicated in the reproduction of sexism.

Classroom practice, the gender dynamics and its implications on the life of the Namibian learner, needs to be investigated. Decker and Lemmer (1996:6) noted that so far most researchers on sexism in the world have concentrated on issues of access and formal equality.

Like elsewhere in the world today, Namibian classrooms often remain the sites of gender stereotyping and sexism embedded in teacher-learner interactions. Often this is a result of the biases teachers were socialized in, within the broader society. What teachers learned from the society could be reproduced in the classroom, and it is internalised by learners, through classroom interactions. Research has documented that teachers come to class with stereotypical views of the learners they have to teach (Kasanda and Shaimemanya, 1997: 143). The two authors also emphasized that teachers' stereotypes are mostly felt by female students. Teachers may unintentionally show a dominating attitude towards girls or may use certain language formulations to silence, suppress and ignore them by virtue of being girls. Teachers may interact more with the boys, that way undermining the participation of girls in classroom activities and eventually their whole education process.

The USAID/ ABEL Project report (1991) confirmed the view raised above that:

When girls arrive at school, many suffer from numerous disadvantages: skeptical parents, disapproving community, heavy household chore load, an intimidating environment, the family, male classmates and teachers. Classroom curricula, teacher [attitude] and behavior, [as well as school] and classroom organization often interact to make girls interlopers in the education system with the result that they drop out, underachieve, or are channeled into productive, stereotypical roles (USAID/ABEL Project, 1991:35).

All of what happens in the classroom can interact to give girls a negatively different experience of education. Here I do not deny the fact that gender bias may affect boys in the same way as it does for girls. My focus is on girls because of a concern that girls seem to be picking up most of what results from gender bias and stereotypical views of their teachers and their male classmates.

Why do girls experience classroom life differently? In this thesis I speculate that it is because of what teachers do in the classroom, most of which is rooted in the teachers' stereotypical beliefs of boys and girls. It is done unintentionally, with the teachers unfortunately not knowing the

message it may convey. The result is hidden. The hidden curriculum is at work, which Lemmer defines as comprising of:

Those aspects of learning in schools that are unofficial, or unintentional, or undeclared consequences of the ways in which teachers organize and execute teaching and learning (Lemmer, 1988: 127).

Under these circumstances teachers may intend to be gender sensitive in their classroom conduct and have all the good practices that go with it, but what they do turns out otherwise. By means of this thesis I wish to explore the extent to which sexist practices are prevalent in selected Namibian classrooms.

MOTIVATION FOR THE STUDY

Concerns about gender dynamics and its implications on the lives of the classroom occupants have been expressed for some time. There is a sense of agreement in literature that since gender dynamics have an effect on the stability of classroom life, there is need to study it, to understand its processes, with a view to challenge it, through sensitizing the role players to a sound awareness (Kasanda and Shaimemanya, 1997). From this view, one could sense that in order for progress to be made in terms of the understanding of gender issues and control of sexist practices in the classroom, we need to work on the attitudes of teachers and the actions of learners towards one another.

The need for studying sexism in the Namibian situation has been brought to my mind through various life experiences in the Namibian education system and within the community where I was born and bred. As a Namibian girl, I went through the education system during the late 1960s and the 70s. After my basic schooling and training for the teaching profession I taught school for seven years. I was then promoted to a position of an Advisory Teacher, the responsibilities of providing continuous professional support to teachers with regard to classroom practice. In 1996 I participated in the Workshop for Planners of Girl-Child Education, which was held in Lusaka, Zambia. In this workshop I presented a paper entitled:

Namibian Education and the Girl-child. This paper featured the achievements of the Namibian Government in terms of gender equity in access to schooling.

As a teacher, my classes comprised girls and boys who were gifted and high achievers (for example in the fields of Mathematics and Science). I saw these students going into different career paths: girls becoming nurses and private secretaries, while boys entered the world of engineering and other related occupations. Why I could not sensitize these students, especially the girls, to follow fields other than those that are considered male oriented, is a matter I could not explain at that time. What I knew is the passion that was never been put into practice, no matter how strong it was.

In my community I participated in women's activities and since 1996 I have been involved with the Women Department of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Namibia (ELCIN), as a member of the Eastern Diocesan Committee and a Director at the Women's desk in my own parish, Oniipa. The Church's mission in this respect was to empower women to realize the potential they have in fulfilling their role as household managers. During this time women talked a great deal about their own empowerment, especially those that are affected by the migratory labour system, to challenge the effects of poverty and diseases (especially AIDS). The struggle women have to face is of that nature, because the salaries their husbands are earning cannot sustain the families they leave behind. Through church related activities, women were brought to the level where they could define their practical needs, which they formulated as the need for survival in the context of their subordinate role and the gender division of labour.

It was this framework for determining women's needs, which strengthened my passion for working with women. One way to do it is through research and studies geared towards education and the school as an institution of learning and socialization. I find it necessary to understand classroom practices, because it is through the interaction in the classrooms that subordination of girls by boys for example, takes place. Classroom activities should be a way to empower girls and positively influence them to pick up their position in modern society in which a woman's role is changing.

Another aspect of the rationale behind this study is the absence in Namibia of the debate on gender and classroom practice. As I pointed out earlier, Namibia adopted a gender sensitive constitution, which guided the educational policy. The country has succeeded in getting girls into school on an equal footing with their male counterparts. The remaining concern is that the initiatives are not in place, which schoolteachers could employ in dealing with gender issues in general to help them realize the extent of sexism at classroom level.

AIM OF THE STUDY

Since little has been done on research in the field of gender and schooling in Namibia, this thesis aims at investigating how gender is at play in the classroom. It looks at those daily practices which shape gender identity and self-perception. I specifically look at incidents of teacher-pupil interaction, which are part of the lesson proceedings, seeking for imbalances that may feature in teacher attitudes and practices concerning his or her learners.

I also look at the language (word choice) of the classroom and how it may be used to promote the discrimination of girls or to prescribe certain behaviors and expectations. I watch how boys treat girls and how the latter position themselves in the classroom culture and discourse, in order to see if girls behave according to how teachers expect them to be as girls.

4. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

In order to achieve the stated aims of this study, the thesis asks the following questions:

- Do teachers hold stereotypical views of the boys and girls they teach?
- What gendered practices are evident in classroom interaction?
- Do teachers attach certain attributes to boys and girls, by which they have to live?
- How do teachers explain what they say and do to boys and girls?
- Do teachers purposely discriminate against girls because of stereotypical expectations they attach to them as girls?

Amidst the shortage of documented evidence about sexism, specifically on Namibia, my research draws heavily from the available literature from else where in the world.

As I pointed out earlier in this thesis, very little has been done about studying sexist teaching practices in Namibian schools. This thesis should therefore be read as a contribution and expansion on the studies and research efforts on gender issues in the Namibian education system. Rather than a conclusive document, my thesis could be essential in highlighting classroom behaviors and actions in terms of negative gender discriminatory practices. It is necessary that we unveil the classroom as a site for learning and a place where its dynamics could contribute to the perpetuation of the problem of sexism. Studying the classroom should help both the government and citizens of the country to find ways how society could appropriately rally against sexism.

SETTING OF THE STUDY

This study does not cover the whole of Namibia. It rather features a combined school (Grade 5-10) in the Ondangwa West Educational Region, where it aims at providing evidence and an understanding of gender based practices in the Namibian context.

The study focuses on the primary phase, for the reason that it is the most formative stage in the mental development of learners and a basis for further learning (Angula, 1991:12). As Minister of Basic Education and Culture, Angula points out that in order for a unified educational system in the emerging Namibia to be realized, it is necessary that basic needs are met for the majority of the school-going population. Angula says further that children who complete the primary phase should be equipped with essential life skills and the capacity to benefit from education.

This thesis supports this view and adds that the essential skills could only be developed in learners if access to schooling is coupled with addressing other social aspects including sexism.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In this study I explore what happens in the classroom in terms of gender-based and sexist teaching practices. The methodology chosen for this study derives from the purpose of the study. When I decided to search for evidence of sexist practices in the classroom in the form of the interactions between teachers and their learners and between learners and learners, it implied that I needed to observe the lesson proceedings.

Since I also needed to understand why teachers say and do certain things, it meant that I needed to interview them. At the very beginning, I saw this study as a qualitative inquiry, making use of observations and interviews as the main tools to obtain the necessary information about teachers' perceptions and expectations of their learners in terms of behaviour and classroom performance. The data gathering techniques I used were classroom observations, group interviews and individual in-depth interviews.

Classroom observations focused on the physical classroom organization, the verbal and non-verbal interactions, as well as teachers' reactions to boys' and girls' behaviour.

In **group interviews** I focused on whether teachers understood the concepts; gender and sex; how they saw the attributes and general characteristics of girls and boys; how they allocated duties and classroom errands; behaviour patterns of girls and boys, as well as perceptions of teachers about girls and boys classroom performance.

The teachers were interviewed in groups according to sex, i.e. male and female teachers separately. The reason for doing this was not only to work with manageable numbers, to ensure maximum participation, but also to allow them open space to air their views with people of their own sex.

The **individual interviews** were specifically meant for the teachers whose lessons were observed. After each lesson observation and depending on whether the observer needed clarity on what featured during the observation, the teachers were called to explain what they said and

did and the reasons behind those actions and language formulations. The reason behind this was for me as a researcher to find out how teachers explain their classroom practices with regard to the learners they teach. For what purpose, for example, do they arrange the classroom in a certain gendered way, or otherwise?

The data gathering tools used were as follow (this is also the order in which they were used: For group interview, I used a semi-structured guide (Appendix A) of open-ended questions, allowing room for probing for detailed information in relation to teachers' perceptions and classroom practices. For lesson observation I used an observation checklist (Appendix B) which contained broad categories of what could be gender-biased practice or stereotypical attributes of boys and girls and behaviour patterns of both teachers and learners. For individual interview I did not have preset questions, because teachers were interviewed based on what has been observed in their classes. Teachers who were interviewed are attached hereto as Appendix C.

In addition to classroom observations and interviews, I also reviewed a body of international literature to find arguments and conclusions drawn and recommendations made for the remedy of the problem of sex and gender biases in the classroom.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

This thesis was limited in a number of ways. My intention was to intensively observe the flow of gender processes and to conduct in-depth interviews, which could eventuate in full explanations of why classroom role-players act the way they do. However the time I had to conduct this research turned out not to be appropriate, because of the fact that the school gave up some of the classes I needed, for the first-year college students who were busy with their school-based activities. This arrangement affected my research negatively in the sense that the teachers I initially had to observe gave up their classes to the trainee teachers. It was a setback, because I had to organize another research population, which was not easy to find.

The study was also constrained by the paucity of published materials on Southern Africa and Namibia in particular. Although there is room for me to count on literature done elsewhere, I run the risk of not taking the aspect of cultural context into consideration.

ORGANIZATION OF THE STUDY

This mini-thesis comprises five chapters. Chapter One maps out the historical context, which prompted the demand for gender equity in education in general and the classroom in particular. Chapter Two explores current literature to find theories on which this study is grounded. Theories of women's marginalisation, subordination and oppression are highlighted. These theories are applied to the classroom situation where the extent of sexism was investigated. Chapter Three maps out the methodology used to investigate classroom practices as they unfold during teacher-learner interactions. Chapter Four discusses what was found in the classroom and how teachers interpret their actions and words. From teachers and learners and from learner-learner interactions I attempt to find out whether the girls are aware of stereotypical formulations and how they position themselves within the classroom culture. Chapter Five is a reflection about the main findings of the study. The chapter concludes by suggesting and recommending strategies to achieve a non-sexist classroom environment.

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CHAPTER TWO

SEXISM IN SCHOOL CLASSROOMS

INTRODUCTION

In this chapter I chart a way through the issues that are the central focus in this specific study, and which serve as a basis for understanding the methodology and direction taken in studying gender issues in the Southern African context, with specific emphasis on Namibia.

To do that, my first part of this chapter provides a review of the broad conceptualization of gender and sex, gender bias and sexism. I then look at the theoretical considerations of gender and the oppression, discrimination and marginalization of women along the line of feminist perspectives, which guided other researchers' studies about gender issues throughout the world. I also look at the current situation of Namibian women in general with emphasis on education. The chapter concludes with what literature says on sexism in school classrooms and how it could be confronted.

UNDERSTANDING THE CONCEPTS: GENDER AND SEX

The complexities in gender issues worldwide have prompted researchers to use different approaches towards conceptualizing and analyzing them. Conceptualizing gender issues, for example in Australia went through different stages of terminology namely, from "equality of opportunity through elimination of sexism." (Taylor, 1995: 137). Many different terms are used to refer to various aspects of gender.

As one reads through literature one is likely to meet terms including sex, gender, gender bias, gender stereotypes and many others. According to Taylor, these terms have different meanings

in particular contexts. For the purpose of this study a conceptualization of the difference between sex and gender is essential, if gender issues in different life contexts are to be understood.

At times the appropriate use of sex and gender has raised controversy as Golombok and Fuvish (1994) put it. Some authors have used them interchangeably. However the common differentiation between gender and sex documented so far is what an unidentified author writes in an undated document (pp.15-16):

God created sex, but society constructed gender

Sex refers to the most physiological differences between women and men such as different genitals and reproductive capacities. It is genetically determined, natural and therefore unchangeable.

Kasanda also writes:

Often the terms gender and sex are used interchangeably. Nonetheless there is an important difference between the two.

Sex refers to biological difference between males and females. That is females and males are anatomically different. Sexism therefore refers to discrimination based upon the individual's sex.

On the other hand, gender refers the male-female interactions and interrelationships. That is, it goes beyond being male or female and includes the roles both males and female engage in due to their biological makeup (Kasanda, 1998: 20).

All those authors confirm that gender aspects are socially constructed and transmitted during the process of socialization. Gender aspects are learned and hence can be changed. Sex roles cannot be changed unless there is medical intervention.

Ellis and Llewellyn (1997) comment further that constructs about gender, class, race and other criteria help individuals and groups to make sense and have control of the world around them. Moreover the key to the construction of gender “ is not the physical or cultural differences that

exist between individuals, but the ways in which value is assigned to these differences”(Ellis and Llewellyn, (1997:83).

Elizabeth Aries’s (1996) comment on understanding the construction of gender values is that, in spite of recent changes in society with regard to gender roles, society attaches meaning to the physiological differences between the sexes. In doing so, the fairly limited range of biological differences is compounded by culturally defined gender differences. The latter prescribe a division of labour, responsibility, rights and obligations to women and men. Moreover it is this gender consignment which children become aware of at a very young age and start behaving accordingly.

Based on the definitions of sex and gender highlighted above, one can easily attach the idea of what constitutes sexism. Lynn Yates (1987) wrote a series of definitions on it, which fit into various situations in society. According to Yates, sexism could mean:

- Making assumptions, having expectations and attitudes based purely on someone’s sex;
- When everybody’s life is defined as a member of one or another sex and every kind of thinking is stamped with the brand of masculine and or feminine.
- A social system and practice in which benefits and disadvantages are meted out on the basis of sex;
- A belief that human sexes have distinctive make up that determines their respective lives, usually in line with the idea that one’s sex is superior and has the right to rule over the other;
- A process through which males and females progressively learn that different things are required of them because of sex;
- Predetermination of a person’s choice without regard to individual differences;
- Any arbitrary stereotyping of males and females on the basis of their gender, [is referred to as sexism] (Yates, 1987: 281)

Sexism could also be defined in terms of messages girls and boys learn through the schooling process. In this case Yates says further that

Sexism is a process through which females and males not only progressively learn that different things are required and expected of them because of their sex, but learn those things in an unexamined way. Good education is incompatible with such a process...(Yates, 1987: 283)

These definitions appear in literature in one form or another, pointing to a number of themes and concerns. Probably one could point to the concern of equal opportunity and that of differential treatment in certain environments and institutions including those of education.

In the school classrooms, boys and girls are supposed to have equal opportunities and receive equal treatment, but attitudes expressed in literature (Thompson, 1986; Golombok and Fuvish, 1994), suggest that it is minimal or non-existent. These differential attitude and behaviours are said to be sexist.

Following Yates' definitions of sexism, classroom practice could be said to be sexist if it promotes the interests of one sex at the expense of the other (Garret, 1987). Literature points to a bulk of inequities of which treatment of girls is compared to boys in the course of schooling. Good and Brophy (1997) have studied classroom interaction and found that the classroom environment forms an individuated concept. Teachers were found to spend more time with boys, giving them most of their attention.

The next section looks at theories that emerged from feminist writers and sociologists, in an attempt to explain the extent of sexism and how it affects women in society. Under discussion are those of gender roles and expectations of society, among others, marginalization, discrimination and subordination of women.

asks, “ what features of human nature or social organization require or demand that women be subordinate to men?”

Functionalists in America would argue that typical split between the responsibilities of women and men within the American nuclear family strengthen the family unit, by shielding the couple from damaging interfamilial competition, clarifying what is expected of each individual and efficiently matching the capacities of each sex with tasks required. (Haralambos and Holborn, 1995:67)

Haralambos and Holborn (1995) contend that the division of labour is inculcated in the young people through education and schooling. In this way education becomes the means toward a division of labour between the sexes through both the overt and the hidden curriculum. Even if the prescribed curriculum does not prescribe teaching according to sex, what teachers do for implementation of the curriculum tends to direct girls to domestic science and boys take the science and vocational oriented fields. The consequence of this, as Acker (1984:67) puts it, is that boys are oriented to be family providers and breadwinners; hence they are to acquire advanced vocational skills.

The Marxist feminist view does not attribute the subordination of women entirely to men, but rather to the needs of capitalism (Haralambos and Holborn, 1995: 592). They see capitalism as the main beneficiary, having both a domestic labour force and a reserve army of labour, which will further the interests of the capitalist class. They also see women’s unpaid work as housewives, mothers and domestic helpers as ways in which women are exploited for the sake of production.

Similarly the Marxist feminists and those who argued from a radical feminist point of view have also emphasized how schools shape female identity and encourage subordinate roles for women. However Acker emphasizes two other elements in this view saying:

Lowered self esteem and acceptance of inferiority as derived from women’s school experiences and men’s control over and definition of knowledge itself (Acker,1984:71).

GENDER AND DISCRIMINATION OF WOMEN

Literature has always pointed out the acute lack of opportunities that women had to compete with men (Garrett, 1987; Taylor, 1985; Wolpe, 1988). The current feminist perspective focuses on this lack. Feminism was founded on the premise that the position society accords to women resulted in this lack of equal opportunity between women and men. The inevitable fact is that women have always been at the margins in all aspects of human endeavor. In this section I discuss theoretical aspects of marginalization and subordination of women in society. I specifically refer to the aspect of patriarchy and male dominance, the ideology behind the current socialization process women find themselves (Meena, 1992) which could be the root cause of marginalization and subordination of women. My explanation follows Crowley and Himmelweit's (1992) analysis of discrimination, subordination and difference.

Crowley and Himmelweit (1992:11) outline the difference between discrimination and oppression and also discuss how ideology and socialization serve to maintain divisions between the sexes. This clearly indicates that women are discriminated against. In the following section I explain the basis upon which women are positioned where they are today.

There is a diverse body of scholarly research, which seeks to explain the root cause for marginalization and subordination of women. This literature employed diverse theoretical and methodological perspectives in studying gender issues.

Ruth Meena's work on the study of gender in Southern Africa enunciates that women's oppression and their subordinate role is located in culture, division of labour, state policies and in employment patterns.

Another view which seeks to explain why women are subordinate to men appears in sociologists' writings (Acker, 1984; Saha and Fagerlind 1992; Haralambos and Holborn 1995). Acker's synthesis highlights major approaches, and their educational applications, to subordination of women, namely the fundamental and implementary approaches. The latter

When men define what women should be asked or what should be done with them, women are left without the space to participate in the construction of knowledge, even in those contexts where women showed the willingness to participate.

Some of the women contexts are different, hence these have to be recognized, (e.g. married, single etc.), so that women can be both morally and materially supported to ensure effective participation in the process of knowledge production. If this cannot happen, women will definitely internalize this subordination, which could culminate into lowered self-esteem.

Unlike the fundamental approaches, which were linked to Marxist and radical feminism, those who hold the implimentary view argue strongly that societal conventions and practices prevent women from realizing their full potential. Women are prevented from full realization of their talents by intended or unintended consequences of social conventions and practices (Acker, 1984). Female socialization results in attributes unsuitable or inappropriate or even incompatible with modern life demands. The labour market operations, the organizational policies, intentionally discriminate against women, preventing them from participation in the job market.

The general position taken by the implimentary approach writers such as Acker (1984); Saha & Fagerlind (1992) and Taylor (1995) is that it does not matter why so many women are subordinated as what can be done about it. Opportunities have to be increased for women. Acker (1984:73) has, however observed through research that writers from this perspective tend to vary and contradict one another in their argument. On the one hand there are researchers who found that schools favour girls, while others say schools overtly and covertly discriminate against them. However the latter line of argument, according to Acker, has been dominant and has been supported.

Feminist reproduction theory speaks to the role of schools in reproducing gender oppression. The general view is that women's oppression and domination in society is reproduced through sexist practices in schools. Ann Marie Wolpe (1988) addresses the role of gender in schooling.

She critiques the South African government's statement on gender education and also earlier works on sexism. Wolpe talks about stratification theories, which see women's position as a result of innate psychological differences such as lack of aggression and excessive anxiety. She argues that such a view fails to recognize the powerful forces of capitalism, which needs unpaid domestic work and a reserve army of labour.

Wolpe's (1994) critique of the ANC statements and framework on education, points to the need to locate women's oppression and experience in schooling, in the sense that the education system, through both the overt and covert curriculum articulates with the domestic sphere, reinforcing traditional female roles:

The education system and most particularly the schooling aspect, plays a significant part in reinforcing the traditional roles of women and, indeed, in identifying the paths they should take in adult life (Wolpe, 1994:12-13).

This, according to the critique, provides girls with a set of contradictory messages. On the one hand "one is to be a good wife and mother", while on the other, "to participate in the public world."

Wolpe's work is valuable in pointing to the need to locate women's oppression in schooling, although it does not tell us much on how hegemonic and sexist practices manifest itself in the classroom. However her arguments concur with Rosemary Deem's view on the same issue. Deem, quoted by Kathleen Weiler (1988: 35), argues that schools are central to the process of maintaining and reproducing the existing sexual division of labour. Schools prepare girls for certain kinds of work. The women's-place-is-home idea is promoted. Deem is quoted saying that:

Education does not create the sexual division of labor, nor the kinds of work available in the labor market, nor class relations of society, but it rather does nothing to undermine them (Wolpe, 1994:12).

In as much as all the above arguments are valuable contributions to the explanation for the oppression and subordination of women it is necessary that an exploration could be carried out into the role women play in their own subordination. My next section looks into this.

WOMEN AND THEIR OWN SUBORDINATION

So far subordination of women is located within the needs of capitalism where women reproduce the labour force as child bearers and rearers, as well as husband care givers (Angula, 1999). Angula adds that women are oppressed as a matter of class, where the dominant male working class, oppresses them, which is also a capitalist requirement.

Radical feminists argue that in addition to male dominance embedded in the needs of capitalism, patriarchy is one other force that suppresses women. According to Saha and Fagerlind (1992) patriarchy assumes the superiority of men and it pervades all aspects of life of society including the capitalist society. This implies that men hold into the exercise of force over women, not only in capitalist societies, but also in other economic societies.

These views explain why women are oppressed and kept in such lower status in society. Literature has also looked into the part women play in their own subordination. One theoretical way for this is the concept of hegemony.

Hegemony is rooted in critical education theory, which rests in a critical view of existing society, arguing that hegemony as a practice is also capable of being changed (Weiler 1988:13). It is rooted in Marxist theory and Antonio Gramsci is the source of this theoretical approach. Weiner writes that it is concerned with:

The various ways in which dominant classes in any society impose their own conception of reality on subordinate classes, and the possible ways in which the oppressed can create alternative cultural and political institutions to establish their own understanding of oppression in order to oppose and change it. (Weiler, 1988:14)

Quoting Boggs, Weiler (1988) defines hegemony as an organizing principle, which is defused by “ agencies of ideological control and socialization into every day life.” Accordingly, every individual is shaped through hegemonic ideas (Weiler, 1988:14). For Apple (1979) the concept of hegemony is used to illustrate what he calls, the ‘mechanisms of domination’ in the context of schools.

Going back to Weiler’s argument where an individual can be shaped through hegemonic ideas, I now look at the role women play in their own oppression through hegemonic social practices. I am using Peter McLaren’s (1989) view, of these practices, which provides an insight into ways in which inequalities are maintained and challenged in the spheres of school culture and the wider society. I use his definition of hegemony, which adds the flavor of consent by the oppressed group or an individual.

McLaren’s version of hegemony refers to:

The maintenance of domination not by sheer exercise of power but primarily through consensual social reforms and social structures produced in specific sites, such as the church, the state, the school, the mass media, the political system and family..... It is a struggle in which the powerful wins the consent of those who are oppressed, with the oppressed unknowingly participating in their own oppression (McLaren, 1989:173)

This process features much in literature. It is whereby women throughout the world unknowingly become their own oppressors, by willfully participating in the construction of rules and regulations, which oppress them. In this way, they create self-barriers, consciously supporting the inherent domesticity of women.

Weiler (1988), whose themes derive from feminist thinking and praxis, investigated how girls and women actively position themselves in discourses that subordinate them. Ruth Meena made use of the same argument and gave an example in the context of performing arts saying that:

Women are perceived as perpetrators of negative images and hence held partly responsible for their subordinate position in society (Meena 1992:11).

Meena argues further that women agree to play roles which depict their subordinate status as well as providing an applauding audience to such performances.

Since hegemonic practices could be challenged and resisted, Meena's study underscores the need for women to resist such practices. It can be diffused using the same hegemonic principles by providing alternative images through same cultural practices, which gears towards change. Meena concludes that a culture of oppression can be converted into the one of liberation, which enhances women's self-confidence and human rights. Women have to take active part in the creation of alternatives for themselves.

Having looked at the conceptualization of gender, and the theoretical approaches, which could be employed to study women issues, my next section turns to the significance of these theories to the understanding of the position of the Namibian women and girls today. My overview will focus on the sexual division of labour and the oppressive gender relations with the cultural and socialization frameworks in the Southern African context, with special emphasis on the Namibian education.

WOMEN IN NAMIBIA TODAY

Non-discrimination on the grounds of sex was recognized as a fundamental human right in the Charter of the United Nations adopted in 1945, and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Many international treaties and conventions, for example the UN Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women are ratified in countries' constitutions, including that of Namibia.

The principle of non-sexism is recognized in Article 23 of the Namibian Constitution. The latter declares that, " no person may be discriminated on the basis grounds of sex, race, color, ethnic

origin....". This principle holds that it is wrong to treat people differently and in a negative way, which could have a detrimental effect on their self-perception and esteem.

Women in Namibia could be fortunate in many ways. The Constitution paved the way for the establishment of the Department of Women Affairs (DWA), which is strategically placed in the Office of the President, which guarantees women support from the highest authority in the country.

The DWA,s Annual Program Sharing Forum (APSF) Report (1994:1) declares that this is an indication of the Government being committed to the removal of the obstacles that hinder the development of women. The APSF report defines the responsibility of the DWA, which include "coordinating and guiding the networking of committees dedicated to the promotion of gender issues."

Looking at the gender sensitivity of the Namibian Constitution, with the DWA in place, my next paragraphs give an overview of the status of women in Namibia. As highlighted in the UNDP Report (1995) women are the largest demographic group in the country, but their status depicts a contrast. On the one hand it has the potential for reconstruction, but on the other it shows very limited opportunities.

The report points out that Namibia could be declared an unequal world, which reflect achievements in constitutional, legal, and socio-economic matters, but with limited opportunities for women. The status of women can however be summarized as follows:

Employment

Namibia's narrowly based economy and the persistent gender bias in employment practices, especially in the private sector, are and will continue to hamper women's entry into formal employment. The Human Development Report (1998) on Namibia indicates that females counted for only 40 percent of employees, half of which are employed in the domestic sphere.

In the absence of hard data on wage differences between men and women, the generally subordinate ranking of women in formal employment suggests that an average woman earns considerably less than her male counterpart. The 1991 annual census indicates that only 49.0 percent women participated in the Namibian labour force, with slightly less than half of those women classified as domestic workers. However the majority of what remains are not economically active, considering the fact that a number of them are subsistence farmers, with very little or no education (Central Statistics Office (CSO), 1995: 28-29).

In the informal sector the census indicates that women represent one third of workers, dominating the sale of home-brewed liquor, cooked food and used clothing. This is also due to low educational levels, lack of capital and record keeping as well as low incomes (Gardner, 1998). Men are usually found in higher income generating activities, like taxi driving.

Agriculture

The Human Development Report (1998) indicates further that the majority of Namibian workers are in agriculture, with more men than women. This feature is more prominent in the Northern Regions the country, where more households are female headed. The latter is again due to the migrant working conditions, characterizing these regions. In agriculture also, the report points out, new technologies are more often applied to male work tasks, leaving women's work at low productive levels.

Access to resources and services

It is indicated further that women in Namibia have little or no access to land ownership, livestock keeping, inheritance, credit facilities, health as well as to education and training.

An example given is that of primary health care, whereby the service is given to women, as if men do not need it. The cultural gender role issue comes in, even with new medical approaches. A male is perceived strong, even in sickness (DWA/ASPF, 1994:14).

Positions of power and decision-making

Gender issues related to decision are rather easy to identify. Issues of this nature are related power and control of daily activities ranging from the lowest level, the household to political decision-making. Prior to independence, representation of women in government structures was virtually non-existent. Since then a visible Affirmative Action strategy has been implemented, which facilitated representation of women in the public service. Today, the Namibian Parliament houses women, who are positions like as Ministers or Deputy Ministers and Director Generals, Attorney Generals and other high offices.

In 1996, 43.6 percent of the civil servants consisted of women, with black women accounting for 43.3 percent (CSO, 1995). This is an indication that gender constituted grounds for Affirmative Action (Jauch, 1998).

Education

The Namibian education system is one area where women have been discriminated against. It could as well be one of the critical areas of women empowerment. Like any other country in the world, education in Namibia is reinforced by tradition. Cultural norms in some communities reinforce the 'women's-place-is-home' idea. Society conforming to this idea would mean de-emphasizing education for women and girls. Some communities in the Namibian society are still reluctant to educate girls. Instead, girls are groomed for marriages, thus leaving little room for girls' full participation in education (Kasanda and Shaimemanya, 1997).

Today women and girls are increasingly participating in educational activities and schooling. The Ministry of Basic Education and Culture 's EMIS (1998) statistical service indicates that 60.9% of the Namibian teaching force is comprised of women, with the majority of them dominating the primary phase. This pattern could reflect a cultural norm of women being associated with childcare.

The EMIS (1998) indicates also that girls outnumber boys in terms of enrollment at every level of education, but the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA, 1998) country report on Namibia observes that fewer complete the respective cycles. The government of Namibia is however committed to a universal education system which features free compulsory primary education. This, in my view, should address the current situation whereby women have received the least education and are still treated as inferiors to men. The next section looks at the extent of sexism and gender bias in classrooms.

SEXISM IN CLASSROOMS

Worldwide literature on gender and education focuses on girls' experiences of classroom life in relation to their male counterparts. Research looks at the role of the school and that of teachers. Teachers, having themselves been socialized into the dominant culture, bring with them 'taken-for-granted' assumptions and beliefs to the classroom (UNESCO, 1995: 5).

This means that teachers often have different expectations of male and female pupils in terms of aptitudes and abilities, which may lead them to treat them differently in the classroom context.

Learning occurs in a social context and in interaction between people (Robinson, 1994:14). In classrooms, the teacher and learners engage in any communication. It is this interaction, which forms the heart of teaching and learning. In interaction with learners, the teacher becomes the source of the learner's development.

Robinson notes further that verbal interaction has received much attention in literature on the teaching process, compared to non-verbal interaction. This is so in spite of the fact that a message can be transmitted, not only through speech but also by eye contact, touching and facial expressions.

In the next section I focus on the extent of sexism and gender bias in the classroom, with special focus on the girls' experience in relation to their male counterparts. I use literature of the 1980s

and the 1990s from around the world. Special attention is given to those that went into the classrooms for observation.

The Southern Natal Gender Committee of the South African Democratic Teachers Union (SADTU) declares:

We believe that the classroom is a hive of sexism, which is unconsciously propagated. In the first instance, teachers have been trained within a patriarchal tradition and were taught in the same tradition. It is important for teachers to become aware of the way in which we perpetuate a sexist learning environment and seek ways to change it (SADTU, 1994:59).

What constitutes sexism in the classroom lies in the definitions developed by Lynn Yates, which were presented earlier in this Chapter. Following from Yates' definitions, sexism entails a range of practices, which are embedded in the teacher's attitude, expectations and behaviour.

The gender bias, which we earlier located in patriarchal gender relations, seems to be reproduced in the classroom. In order to substantiate the claims about sexist practices in the classroom, it is important that a close look into the literature is carried out.

THE NAMIBIAN SITUATION

Very little research has been conducted on education and gender in Namibia. The EMIS publication of the Ministry of Basic Education and Culture (1993) explored gender issues in Namibian schools since independence. It indicated a change in male predominance in lower primary grades to a strong predominance in higher grades. However the national pattern of gender participation in schooling is such that, in 1998 female learners made up 50.6% of the Country's learner population. The publication further notes that the predominance of girls could be coincidental or could also reflect the overall sex ratio in Namibia population between the age of 6 and 18.

The 1991 Population and Housing census indicated women comprising 51.4% of the whole population. Despite this effort made in getting girls in school, the problem of sexism in the classroom remains unchallenged. Kasanda and Shaimemanya (1997) speak to this issue. The two authors' work provides a good starting point to justify the existence of sexist practices in the Namibian school classrooms. In this book, the factors, which hinder the provision of quality education for girls and the effect it might have on their education are addressed. Shaimemanya and Kasanda identify issues such as curriculum bias; timetabling of school subjects; poverty due to female-headed households; teenage pregnancies; and beliefs and attitudes of teachers and girls.

Referring to scholarly literature from all over the world, for example works of Delamont (1990); Weiner (1991), Shaimemanya and Kasanda (1997) found that both male and female teachers come to class with biased views of the learners they are to teach. Gender bias, is said to stem from culture in society. Teachers as members of the gender-stereotyped society bring to class what society expects of the sexes. This, according to Shaimemanya and Kasanda, causes teachers to treat girls and boys differently, thus communicating their expectations and attitudes to the learner, through classroom interaction. Girls, who, for example are labeled less able than boys in the highly valued subjects, may develop a negative self-image (UNESCO/UNICEF, 1995:6), and become demotivated, which could be the cause of poor performance in school.

Such practices, according to Shaimemanya and Kasanda are not only contrary to the notion of 'Education for All', which Namibia professes, but also to the provision of quality education for girls as part of the 'All'.

In their final analysis, Shaimemanya and Kasanda speak to the need for teachers and male learners to be made aware of their classroom behaviour and the effect it may have on the self-esteem of the female learner, saying:

Teachers' classroom practice including their expectations and roles in encouraging boys and girls in continuing their education need to be researched. This may include the effect of teachers' expectations on the learners' performance and their perceived and

actual roles in the classroom concerning boys and girls (Shaimemanya and Kasanda, 1997:148).

Although Kasanda and Shaimemanya's research is a commendable effort in this regard, more evidence is needed, which could be drawn from research done elsewhere. My next section looks at literature from all over the world, specifically that which went into classroom, to observe and talk to teachers about their practice.

Lemmer (1988) studied gender balance in the classroom and declared that the environment is a determining factor in the formation of gender identity and treatment. Her study concluded that the classroom environment disadvantages the female students, in the sense that it limits the realization of their potential. Lemmer observed that teachers' interaction with their learners tends to perpetuate the girls' oppression.

Other studies on this topic sketch the essential characteristics and attributes for boys and girls in the classroom, which at times warrant from them a certain type of action and/or response from the teacher. It has been repeatedly documented that teachers have differential expectations of boys and girls in terms of behaviour and achievement (Wolpe, 1988; Stanworth, 1984; French, 1990; Good and Brophy, 1997).

Wolpe's (1988) studies have found that teachers expect some ideals of female students, which tend to be generalized over the whole student population. She puts it as follows:

Girls were considered to be appreciative, calm, considerate, cooperative, sensitive, obedient, tidy, neat, conscientious, orderly, fuzzy, catty, bitchy, gossipy....., Boys are considered to be active, adventurous, assertive, energetic, independent, inventive, aggressive, self-confident....(Wolpe, 1988:128)

Based on these stereotypical notions and the essential characteristics given to boys and girls, Wolpe found that such notions are confirmed by the teacher's views. She concluded later that, they are inconsistent with what was found to be reality.

Drawing on Lemmer's argument, students are expected to work within the framework of these stereotypical notions of their teachers. Anyone found not to conform to what is expected of her/him is considered deviant. It is this deviance that determines the quantity and quality of interaction patterns to be shared with the teacher (French and French, 1993).

It is almost universally accepted that boys are noisy and demand more of the teachers' attention than girls. They are more troublesome and need more disciplinary interactions (Wolpe (1988: 38). They dominate and keep the girls under their control (Stanworth, 1984), to the extent that girls are silenced and seem not to be concerned about boys' behaviour (Lemmer, 1988:10). Wolpe describes the finding saying, girls on the other hand are said to be quiet and unproblematic. Under their quietness, they are expected to be obedient, and as result receive little attention.

One example Lemmer gave in her findings with regard to the silencing and domination of girls is where boys refused to clean up their mess. Without taking any disciplinary measures, the teacher ignored the boys' deviance and used the obedient girls to service the boys, by tidying up for them and to help restore the classroom peace and order.

Similar to this example is instances whereby girls are punished for showing what is expected from male student. Girls can get punished after having shouted out the answer while it is somebody else's turn. Normally boys use this mechanism to get immediate teacher attention. While it is required that turns are allocated by the teacher after the students have raised their hands, the rule, according to Lemmer is only enforced for girls, while boys get away with it. Carelessness in boys is perceived as sign of creativity, but is thought of as a mess in a girl. The girl could be penalized for it (Wolpe, 1988:37). Lemmer concludes her argument on behavior saying:

The inhibition of development of female autonomy by discouraging independent behavior can handicap mathematics and science achievement, which hinges on intellectual independence and risk-taking (Lemmer, 1988:37).

Regarding teacher expectations of students in terms of achievement, literature documents that boys are more logical thinkers and that they grasp concepts more quickly than girls. As a result, they are expected to handle more complex and challenging academic tasks, especially in subjects that are considered male oriented (Lemmer, 1988:129). In this analysis it is pointed out that the success of boys is attributed to intelligence, whereas that of the girls is a matter of conformity.

Classroom interaction

Literature emphasizes repeatedly that teachers spend more time interacting with male students than with their female counterparts. Quoting Jones, Mifsud (1994:12) reports that there are striking quantitative differences favouring boys, with the difference significant for “direct questions, open questions, call-outs and total positive teacher-student contacts”. Other contacts include behavioral warnings and criticisms, which girls receive less frequently.

In general, research suggests that the differences between boys and girls in terms of patterns of interaction with their teachers are due to differences in behavior of boys and girls themselves. Mifsud (1994) is further of the opinion that it is not the intention of the teacher to treat the two sexes differently. Boys however misbehave more than the girls and initiate interaction with the teacher more frequently, the behaviour which will warrant them the teacher’s attention. Mifsud notes further that teachers give instructions and procedures, check boys’ progress on assignment, or in general monitor and control their activities more than they do with the girls.

Wolpe’s study which provided a detailed description of the relationship between boys and girls in the classroom made some relevant conclusions. From her observations and interviews, Wolpe (1988), finding affirmed that teachers hold stereotypical views of their learners, teachers behaviour was far from being consistent and varied, depending on the circumstances. With regard to boys’ and girls’ behaviour, Wolpe found that irrespective of how learners are labeled, both girls and boys displayed characteristics, which are expected from both sexes. She puts it this way:

Irrespective of their teachers beliefs, the fact is that girls were far from being passive: those whose school work was exemplary participated fully in schoolwork... nor can it be said that those who were not working consistently at their school work had suffered as a result of more attention being given to the boys (Wolpe, 1988:55).

Wolpe hereby confirmed that teachers spend more time with boys than with girls, because girls were much quieter than boys. This, to Wolpe, does not mean that girls are not naughty. She found that girls did the same things as boys, which most research has indicated to the contrary.

The only consequence of the girls' behaviour is that it facilitated the teachers to keep reprimanding the boys, which lengthened their time together, and made them forget or ignore the girls' disruptions. Wolpe emphasized the fact that girls are not victims of boys. They rather have mechanisms of dealing with the boys' behaviour. Whether teachers are aware of the stereotypical attitudes and differential treatment they inflict on their students and the effect of the message they convey through such treatment is a question international research has tried to answer. Generally, findings on this are that, most of the teachers affirmed that it is never their intention to treat differently. They rather act according to circumstances surrounding them in the classroom. In the next section I discuss the hidden curriculum, drawing from the writings of Dekker and Lemmer (1996), Wolpe (1988) as well as Stanworth (1984).

THE HIDDEN CURRICULUM

What is the hidden curriculum? What messages are transmitted through the hidden curriculum? How do students receive stereotypical messages about themselves? Some of the questions raised above, could be useful in the search for understanding the hidden curriculum and how it works. The hidden, as defined by Lemmer,

Comprises of those aspects of learning in schools, that are unofficial, unintentional, undeclared consequences of the way in which teachers organize and execute teaching (Lemmer,1988:55).

From Lemmer's definition, the hidden curriculum runs alongside the formal one. The hidden curriculum is only "pervasive and subtle that at times teachers and learners may not be fully conscious of its influence" (Lemmer, 1988: 55). Since it works at the level where attitudes are formed, it may have greater influence in perpetuating gender bias than the formal curriculum.

Literature has repeatedly emphasized how pupils are labeled as conforming to gender stereotypes: whereas boys are active, aggressive and extroverted, girls are passive and dependent (Dekker and Lemmer, 1996). Teachers seem to be enthusiastic and confident in that they see boys approaching activities aggressively. This on the other hand leaves girls uncertain and reluctant to do like wise.

In his discussion of the hidden curriculum, Stanworth (1984:149) demonstrates that there is a gap between the ideals teachers profess in theory and what they actually say and do in the classroom. The criteria according to which teachers divide their energies among their learners would seem to have unintended consequences of disadvantaging girls (Stanworth, 1984:155). Stanworth goes on to argue that these criteria constitute a form of "indirect discrimination, underestimation of girls talents, their commitment and their needs" (Stanworth, 1984:156).

CONCLUSION

Although there has been a lot of research on gender issues in education worldwide, which has warranted an increase in awareness of women and girls' education in general, there is still much to be bridged in some countries, especially in Africa. Namibia remains one of the countries which continue to experience an acute paucity of researched data, which could be useful in validating experiences in education.

The Namibian National Gender Policy recognizes convincingly the need for research into the correction of gender discrimination in the Namibian systems. In this thesis I have expanded on the recognition and suggested further that it is not only research, but also the conceptual frameworks and understandings, which people have about gender issues that needs to be addressed. This is very crucial in the Namibian context where gender issues have been taken to

mean women's issues, to the extent of putting these issues to the margins of debates and discourses.

Like the South African context, the Namibian concept of gender needs to be expanded to incorporate the notion of fair treatment for all. This is so because the Namibian notion of gender equality seems to end with getting equal numbers of girls to boys in school. Morrel (1992) says that access alone cannot ensure the elimination of gender discrimination in its entirety. I would expand on this that access should go hand in hand with the improvement of classroom practice to create a sexist-free environment, which is conducive to learning.

The Namibian society is being confronted with the challenge of sexist practices in its education system. Even though there is evidence of progress made with the gender awareness, which I think has made an impact in terms of access to schooling, girls can still be termed as the most exploited, the most discriminated and subordinated.

This chapter has highlighted some theoretical aspects of the problem of sexism by exploring the literature. It is evident that there is little done on Namibia, which only leaves room for investigation, in order to determine the extent and substance of what girls experience in the classroom. My next chapter describes the methodology which was used to investigate how gender differentiation is reinforced in the classroom. The chapter is presented as a case study accounting for the gender dynamics in a few Namibian classrooms.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

INTRODUCTION

In this chapter I describe the methodology which I used in the investigation of classroom sexism, as may be evident from teacher behavior and practice. This investigation made use of qualitative research methods, namely observation of classroom activities and interviews with teachers in groups and individually. The significance of the methods, and procedures, how each of these methods was used, are herein explained and motivated.

The body of literature reviewed in the last chapter is an indication that gender issues have attracted considerable international research attention, especially during the 1970s and 1980s. Amidst this wealth of research, the literature collectively points out that there is still much to be explored about specific gender issues, like those discussed in Chapter Two of this document. Ruth Meena (1992: 25) points out to the fact that most of the researchers on gender are from different disciplines, which makes it difficult for other researchers to conceptualize theoretical and conceptual issues of gender which form the basis of data interpretations, and as well as the research techniques which could be employed to study those issues.

This study has been undertaken to investigate what takes place in school classrooms, which results in girls experiencing the educational practices differently from boys. The focus was on teachers' behavior and actions, as they interact with their learners. The broad term used is sexism and the concern is how girls experience it. In Chapter Two I used Lynn Yates' (1987) definitions of sexism.

Following from Yates' definition, sexism takes many forms. It could be by omission and exclusion of some people (e.g. women's issues from educational debates) from certain discourses. It could be by subordination and marginalization, or using language to silence and suppress certain people's ideas (e.g. those of girls in the classroom), and it could cause someone

to feel worthless. Given a variety of perspectives about gender differences in classroom settings, one of our tasks is to go into classrooms to see how learners are treated and whether the teachers are able to explain what they do and why.

Exploring what happens in the classroom, finding out whether gender is a variable which culminates in sexism, could possibly lead to the development of strategies to learn to understand it and to challenge it with the aim of minimizing its negative effects on those who are affected most.

Since literature documents the pervasiveness of sexist practices in school classrooms and how complex classroom dynamics are, there is a need for a research methodology that digs deep into those complexities (Kasanda and Shaimemanya, 1997: 145). The methodology which is suitable for the kind of research, has to be structured in such a way that it enables the researcher to study and understand what is happening in the classroom. Many researchers who studied classroom practice have done it using qualitative research and its methodological variants to affect understanding and improvement of classroom situations.

Before I turn to my own research, which employed qualitative methodology, I briefly discuss qualitative research methods and the significance attached to their use by researchers. As a point of reference, I use Macmillan and Schumacher (1993), Bell (1993) and Taylor and Bogdan's (1998) description of qualitative research methods. I draw heavily from the design used by Ann Marie Wolpe (1988), Helja Antola Robinson (1994) and Richard Tabulawa (1996).

QUALITATIVE RESEARCH METHODS

In choosing the methodology for research, one is often confronted by the debate of what quantitative and qualitative methods do to research study results. Critiques of qualitative research argue that qualitative research has failed to provide sufficient design specificity. Others feel it is all ethnography (Macmillan and Schumacher, 1993:386). Tabachnick (1989) examined some of the advantages and problem of using qualitative research methods to understand teaching, learning and schooling.

Tabachnick finds the use of the term 'qualitative research' problematic in the sense that it does not describe the research methods used. Instead, it is used to separate social science research into quantitative and qualitative. The term is used to denote 'quality' as if quantitative research does not care about the aspect of quality or as if those who use qualitative research are not interested in quantity.

In his final analysis, Tabachnick prefer to use the term 'naturalistic research', "the term, which helps us to recognize the very old tradition in which it has its roots" (Tabachnick, 1989:155). Alternatively he would rather use 'abstracted social research', "because the methodology has us to examine data from the natural context" (Tabachnick, 1989:155). Naturalistic research however remains closer to the natural context under observation and its advantage is that it gives room for a fuller description and analysis of the situation under scrutiny.

Amidst this debate over terms and methods, one finds refuge in those authors, who, like Judith Bell (1993), take a neutral stance based on the argument that each research approach has its own pros and cons. In the next paragraph I briefly discuss qualitative research methods, their origin and how their various techniques have been used. Special emphasis is oriented to observation and interview, the techniques that form the core of my study.

Macmillan and Schumacher (1993:372) define qualitative research as follows:

Qualitative research is a naturalistic inquiry, the use of non-interfering data collection strategies to discover the natural flow of events and processes and how participants interpret them.

Qualitative research seeks to understand social phenomena, from people's perspectives. One seeks to understand participants' viewpoints by describing their beliefs, thoughts, ideals and actions through which meanings to social events are constructed.

Qualitative research methods, especially the ethnographic style, have been used by anthropologists, who studied intact situations of nations and cultures. They used observation and/or interviews, sometimes becoming part of the culture under investigation (Bell, 1993:10).

The essence of these research methods is sketched by Malinowski's writing as quoted in Macmillan and Schumacher that:

The goal which an ethnographer should never lose sight of, is to grasp the native's point of view, his relation to life, to realize his vision of his world... to study the institutions, customs, and codes or to study the behavior and mentality without the subjective desire of feelings by what these people live, of realizing the substance of their happiness...(Macmillan and Schumacher, 1993:137).

DESCRIPTION OF THE STUDY

In this study is based on the following general questions:

- Do teachers hold stereotypical views of the learners they teach?
- What gendered practices are evident in the classroom interaction?
- Do teachers attach certain attributes to boys and girls, by which they have to live?
- How do teachers explain what they say and do to boys and girls?
- Do teachers purposely discriminate against girls because of stereotypical expectations they attach to them as girls?

A key assumption of this study, supported by Jequetta Megary (1984:19) and Ann Marie Wolpe (1988:43), is that the school classroom is the critical unit in reproducing gender stereotyping. These and many other researchers agree that the behaviours of pupils and more especially their achievement in academic subjects, is partly a function of the school curriculum and cultural characteristics of the school social system.

I pointed out in my introduction to this chapter that this study seeks to understand the extent of discriminatory and sexist practices in particular Namibian classrooms. I looked at excerpts

teacher-learner interaction, classroom organization, as well as stereotypical language formulation of teachers. I looked at how language may be used to regulate, silence and structure expression and the way people of the classroom should express themselves (Giroux and Freira, in Weiler, (1988:1). These practices in my view make a difference in influencing the self-perception, confidence and esteem of the girls as they progress through the education system. Megary (1984) commented on the issue of stereotypes as embedded in language as follows:

Gender (stereo) typing is subtle and pervasive. Even people, who regard themselves as enlightened and sensitive about sex roles, often underestimate the prevalence of gender stereotyping. It is embedded in our language and the concepts that we use to organize our life (Megary, 1984:19).

This does not only show us that sexism exists, but it also alerts us to the need to think about it, as we may not be aware of us reproducing it. Wolpe (1988:43) also notes that classrooms are sites in which sexism prevails, but she also raises some questions as to how marked sexism is in everyday classroom life and whether observations of classroom life “bear this out”.

In studying the issues raised above, I chose to use qualitative research techniques, observation and interviews, because of the usefulness and suitability other researchers found in them. These methods have been found appropriate to research in education and especially studies that question some dilemmas in teaching (Marshall and Rossman, 1994:2) and the need to change undesired practices.

Since my study fits Marshall and Rossman’s description of where qualitative methods are suitable, using observation allowed me to be in the classroom to talk to people and record what they say and ask them what it means to them. What I found is presented in a non-technical language, reflecting the spoken word of the respondents and not as statistical information.

The next section is a description of my research approach and how fieldwork was conducted. It focuses on explaining the site of my research and the data gathering techniques that I employed to investigate excerpts of gender bias as may feature in teachers’ attitude and actions as well as language formulations, division of labour and the physical organization of the classroom.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The choice of an overall method for this research was implicit in the formulation of this mini-research project. When I decided to study teachers' behavior and actions, it implied that I would observe their classes. If I needed to hear what they had to say about their own practices in the classroom, interviews would be the only option for that. Nevertheless, other approaches could have been considered as ways to provide useful information about what teachers say and do in their classrooms. This study could have been an in-depth study of more primary schools, over a longer period of time, where observations and interviews are used with a larger population of teachers, and this could have yielded a variety of perspectives. The time at my disposal meant that I needed to be selective in the choice of school and teachers. It could also have been ethnography, but this as well needs more time than what I had for this study.

THE PILOT DATA COLLECTION

The draft of the interview guide, as well as the classroom observation sheet was pre-tested in March 2000, the purpose of which was to ensure that the respondents were able to understand the questions and answer them usefully. The test was conducted on teachers of grade 5-7, who were attending a workshop on assessment at one of the local resource centers in northern Namibia. The approach taken for the pretest mirrored that of the real research conduct. Two groups of teachers were interviewed separately.

The classroom observation sheet proved to be effective as data collection tool, therefore it was used as is during the real observations.

The interview guide had a few problems. Teachers in the pilot group could not distinguish between gender and sex, despite my own explanations. Due to limited time at my disposal I had to use it as was. During the real interview the teachers did better than during the piloting session. Teachers could adequately differentiate between the two concepts. Therefore no major revisions or changes were made about the tools.

SELECTION OF THE SITE AND THE POPULATION OF THE RESEARCH

The research was conducted at Akatenya Combined School (the name of the school has been changed). The school is situated in the Ondangwa West Educational Region in the northern part of Namibia. In 1999 the school hosted a learner population of 380, half of whom were enrolled at the upper Primary phase (Grade 5-7) level. Thirteen teachers taught this phase at this school.

Since these were the only teachers available for this study, I did not have to worry about issues pertaining to sampling. The accepted size for a group interview is five to eight members (Quaidoo, 1997), and I was content with the six teachers available for my study.

The school was chosen for the fact that it meets the basic requirement for this research project. It is an ordinary combined school, which hosts learners from all different socio-economic backgrounds. It is rural-based, as the majority of Namibian schools are.

An important criterion for its selection was the fact that it is one of the schools under my jurisdiction, as Senior Education Officer responsible for the primary phase in the Ondangwa west region. In this way it was readily accessible to me, not only physically, but also in the sense that I did not have to formally request permission from the ministry higher officials, to use it for my research project. I had to simply work directly with the headmaster of the school. The Director of the Region and the Inspector of schools for the circuit where the school is situated, were, however informed of the research through my routine work plan.

Given the reality that I had very limited funds available for my project, some of my research activities were integrated into my routine activities such as school visits and classroom observations for teacher professional development purposes. There were also times when I had to take leave from my work to fully engage with my research. At this time I did not have direct support from my directorate.

This school was studied for ten days during September–October 1999, using observation and interviews. Initially the headmaster of the school assured me that I had all the thirteen teachers for my study, but later only eleven of them demonstrated the willingness to take part (especially in the interviews), and were therefore interviewed in groups comprising of six males and five females. Out of the 11 teachers who were interviewed in groups, five of them were observed while teaching Mathematics, Natural Science and Health Education, Craft and Technology, Social Studies and Oshindonga (the mother language for the majority of the learners). Altogether, ten lessons (two from each teacher) were observed.

Focus groups for interviews should ideally be composed of people who are similar or people whose differences do not inhibit group members' comfort and openness. It was for this reason that I decided to interview males and females in separate groups. Either males or female teachers might possibly talk more openly in a group on their own. The size of the group was set at 6, so that each teacher would have more time to talk than if it had more than that. If it became, say more than 10, then an interviewer may run the risk of getting some members who feel frustrated or dissatisfied or have to say very little.

The criterion for choosing the subjects for observation is that, some of these have been documented as male dominated fields (James, 1999). For example, Mathematics and Science, are believed to be male domains, whereas girls are generally praised for their excellence in languages and subjects which reflect the domestic sphere. The subjects chosen for this purpose were Mathematics, Natural Science and Health Education, Craft and Technology, Social Studies and Oshindonga. The language of these subjects may reflect some stereotypical attitudes in favour of some learners and negative ones in others. The focus here is not subject specific content, but rather what teachers do while teaching these. It is more on the interaction side of the teaching process.

As I indicated earlier, ten Grades 5-7 teachers in the various subjects were identified to participate in my study, and were requested to avail their lessons to be observed, and to participate in the group and individual interviews. These teachers were chosen on the basis that they were fulltime teachers who have taught school, and especially the primary phase, for more

than one year. Their experience puts them in a position to be in full command of the Namibian post-independence educational reform implementation practices. I had reason to believe that these teachers had confidence in their abilities as professional teachers and demonstrated the ability to express their beliefs intelligibly.

DATA COLLECTION: STARTING THE PROCESS

When I went to Akatenya Combined School for my research on the first day, I started by negotiating with the Headmaster the conditions under which the research was going to take place. Together we discussed the purpose of the study, its duration and the mode of operation. The latter included access to the classrooms, classroom observations, interviews and tape recording. The initial negotiation was then followed by the formal introduction of me, the researcher, to the teaching staff, who knew of my plan only through the letter that I had forwarded them in advance. This was a challenging moment. When I entered the school on the morning of 27 September 1999, I had the impression that I was accepted to carry out my research in this school, with full cooperation. Later my dream was shattered when some teachers kept on changing their mind on my requests, decreasing the population of teachers I had to work with. Some other teachers asked me how they would benefit from what came out of my research. I then promised that I planned to give feedback to the teachers whose lessons were observed, especially when the issues that emerged from the interaction within the lesson, needed clarification. I also had to promise that, I would come back to them before the findings were presented, for them to verify the statements they made. I also promised that a copy of my dissertation was going to be placed in the local Teachers Resource Centre library for easy access to it.

Since my study was an attempt to understand the meanings in classroom patterns of language, behaviour and actions and beliefs of people in the classroom, I had to assume a role which put me in a position where I could see the classroom from a distance, even though I was inside. I assumed the role of a non-participant observer.

CLASSROOM OBSERVATIONS

Observation entails the systematic noting of events, behaviors, and artifacts (objects) in the social setting chosen for the study. For studies relying exclusively on observation, the researcher makes no special effort to have a particular role; to be tolerated as an unobtrusive observer is often enough. (Marshall and Rossman, 1994:79)

Following from the above extract, as a researcher I accepted the underlying assumptions of the approach I took to study classroom interaction at Akatenya Combined School. The data collection method I selected allowed me as a researcher to critically maintain awareness and receptiveness to events and interactions as they came up (Evans, 1987). I was observing both verbal and non-verbal interaction i.e. the actions of the teacher within his/her professional sphere. My emphasis here was on how the teacher acted and perceived his/her learners and the way he/she handled them. My observation was based on a checklist (attached as Appendix B) drawn from what literature documents as sexist. These included gender bias in language, differential treatment of boys and girls through classroom interaction and behaviours. Initially I thought I was going to strictly stick to the observation sheet with pre-identified categories, but as I was observing classes, many interesting issues emerged and I decided to take note of these as well, as I thought they were pertinent to this study. The range of questions I used was adapted from FAWE (1995:17-21), Robinson (1994:44) and Sadker and Sadker (1988:149-151).

In my case too, the key question was simply asking what was happening in actual sense, in terms of the regular behaviours, routines, events and activities. Other things were observed based on some questions, set to guide the researcher. Although the key aspect in the observation schedule was the instructional process, it became necessary for me to look at some contextual descriptions of the classroom atmosphere pertaining the lessons, without strictly adhering to the observation sheet. The notes I took about these helped me to maintain the formality, while creating a free and relaxed atmosphere both for the people under observation and for myself, to enable me to focus on the aim of the study. Issues like the classroom setting, the dress code and the conduct that goes with it, were therefore observed as part of the schedule.

The key aspect to be observed was the instructional process. The whole observation exercise was therefore guided by the following categories:

General atmosphere: What are the rules of the classroom? For example should learners raise their hands before an opportunity is afforded to them to speak/ask or respond to a question? Is this rule enforced for all or are there some learners who violate these rules? What sex are they? How does the teacher handle people who violated the classroom rules? What happens to the ones that obey the rules?

Power and dominance: Who appeared to have more power? Were there learners who dominated others? How did the teacher handle them? Who talked, who listened?

Seating arrangement: How is the classroom setting organised? Is the seating arrangement spontaneous? Who sits where i.e. front, back, middle, groups, pairs and why? Who sits with whom (boy-boy, girl-girl or boy-girl)?

Dress code: What is expected from boys and girls in terms of the way they dress? When does the dress attract attention of the teacher?

Interaction with learners: For what deeds did the teacher punish/reward boys and girls? What comments does the teachers give for right/wrong answers from boys and from girls? How does the teacher praise or encourage a learner for carrying out a task or behaviour?

Teacher's language: Language is perhaps the most subtle way of cementing gender biases through conventional habits of speaking. What a person grows up with acquires a firm place in the traditional heritage, to the extent that it appears natural. In the context of this study the language of the teacher may bring out the gendered attitude during the instructional process. How does the teacher express expectations for boys and for girls?

On **verbal communication**, during the instructional process, I was looking at how the teacher reacts and or gives feedback in evaluation or remediation of either a question or a response from a learner. Is gender bias involved in such feedback?

During classroom lesson observations and at the end of each lesson, I sat for some time, taking notes of what I observed with regard to the classroom setting and the activities of the lessons. I specifically took note of what needed to be explained through individual teachers' interviews. Sometimes I took notes according to the checklist, but I also took noted contextual descriptions of the lesson proceedings without strictly following the checklist. The notes I took helped me to maintain the formality, while creating a free and relaxed atmosphere for both the people under observation and myself, and to enable me to focus on the aim of my study.

In order for me to observe the classroom activities clearly, I sat at the back of the class most of the time. Only in one case did I move closer to a group when learners were going to do an activity in groups, in order to see better and listen to the conversation. While next to a group of learners, I participated in their activities, taking a very low profile, to the level of their understanding and not interfering with their work. That way I created an impression that I was part of them and they would not worry too much about my presence. This of course had to be negotiated with the teacher beforehand, but it could also change my role to that of a participant observer. What matters here is the flexibility of the research technique, to generate data necessary to find answers to the research questions.

In my observation exercise I took note of what Marshall and Rossman (1994) put forth as guiding principle of what classroom observation entails, when they quoted Walker and Adelman (1975):

When we talk about observation, we do not simply mean watching and describing what seems to be going on in a classroom: we want to include attempts to reconcile ourselves to our feelings and responses to events...some degree of sensitivity to the way in which different situations respond to your presence as an observer can also be used to open up the underlying

structure of the situations themselves. (Marshall and Rossman, 1994:10)

INTERVIEWS

I chose interviews as a technique to gather data needed for my research, because of the great strengths other researchers have placed on them. I needed to complement what I observed. Interviews, if used in combination with observations, allow room for the researcher to gather information quickly, and from a variety of perspectives, and to better understand the meanings people attach to their everyday activities. Group-interviews, for example, are advantageous in the sense that a variety of opinions and perspectives comes in from many different people at the same time. In the context of gender studies, which sometimes are sensitive, it is appropriate to interview people in a group in order for them to develop the sense of togetherness and not to have to feel interrogated. Some people would develop and frame their ideas better by hearing what other have to say on certain issues. Michael Quinn Patton writes of the purpose of interviewing as follows:

The purpose of the open-ended interview is not to put things in someone's mind, but to assess the perspective of the person being. We interview people to find out the things we cannot directly observe... We cannot observe opinions that lie behind their behaviours. We cannot observe behaviours that took place some previous point in time. We cannot observe situations that preclude the presence of the observer. We cannot observe how people organized the world and the meanings they attach to what goes on in the world. We have to ask people some questions about those things (Patton, 1990:278).

Following from the above, interviews are communications that aim at giving the researcher access to other people's perceptions. An interview has a purpose. It seeks explanations and questions (McMurray, 1996:46). An interview could be a "speech event" (Spradly, 1979), a friendly talk between two or more encounters. The task of the interviewer however, is to set the rules that govern the type of interview he/she is due to conduct. His/her task is to create a conducive environment for the interview process.

For the purpose of this research, I used interviews to supplement classroom observations done with teachers at this same school. Doing this I thought could be the best way for me to reveal the reality of the classroom. In order for me to reach this goal, two categories of interviews were conducted with teachers in the Upper Primary Phase (Grade 5-7) at Akatenya Combined School: group interviews and individual in-depth interviews. As indicated earlier, eleven teachers were chosen to participate in the interview, based on the subject they teach, and they were the ones interviewed in a group. Out of the eleven, only three of them were interviewed individually, based on what was observed in their classroom interaction with their learners.

What were the teachers interviewed about? Through my literature reviews, I realized that many researchers who have studied gender issues have started their research studies with the construction of gender. In view of this approach, my **group interview guide** followed this format:

- Part A is about **understanding the concepts: gender and sex**. It contained questions about the construction of gender and identity thereof, which serve to sensitise the interviewees regarding these basic concepts namely, gender and sex, the two being the focus of the study; a way to open up the participants' minds. The questions also paved a way for the group discussion to look into the socialization process and the interrelations between men and women in general.
- Part B. is about the **gender attributes and characteristics**: questions in this category serve to elicit sex-role stereotypes about males and females. These are defined as the "rigidly held and oversimplified beliefs that males and females possess, distinct and similar psychological traits and characteristics" (UNESCO, 1998: 12). In the classroom, boys and girls, for example, behave according to these accepted stereotypes.
- Part C. is about **gender differences in behaviour**;
- Part D. is about **gender differences in classroom performance**;
- Part E is about **classroom practices**

Generally the questions I asked in the group interview were meant for me to understand how teachers define not only the concepts, but also the appropriate interests and behaviours for boys

and girls. I also wanted to sense how the teachers' ideas and feelings about the differences and similarities between boys and girls, and between men and women, influence identity. For this purpose, in Part B, I used a game adapted from Ellis and Lewellyn (1997:80-82). In this exercise, coloured construction paper was issued to participants with instructions that when a toy/game/career field is called out, the participants are to use the paper to express whether they would say it is for a boy, or a girl, or a girl and a boy. If a participant feels that the toy is for boys, he/she raises a blue card. If it is for a girl, he/she raises a pink card. For a boy or a girl, she/he raises a yellow one.

As words are called out, the researcher recorded the number of blue, pink and yellow papers teachers raised, to appear in the presentation and analysis of data. After the process was completed, a discussion followed about teachers motivating their choice of pink, blue and or yellow papers.

Other questions were about boys' and girls' behaviours in the classrooms. With these questions I wanted to learn whether teachers thought there were differences between girls and boys with regard to classroom performance, discipline and how boys and girls interacted among themselves and with their teachers.

Since the focus of the study was on teachers' perceptions of their learners, the questions Part C-E concentrated on exploring how teachers handled their learners when faced with behavioural problems during the instructional process. Hearing what teachers say they do, gives a researcher a clue as to whether teachers believe and act on constructs of gender they learned from their own socialization, be it home or through schooling. (The list of questions is attached as Appendix A)

Individual in-depth interviews were conducted with four of the ten teachers whose classes were observed. The purpose for doing that was for me to get teachers to explain what they did under certain circumstances during the pedagogical process. For example if a teacher was observed giving separate tasks for boys and girls, he/she was called to discuss that and motivate

his/her actions. The question would be why the task or activity is appropriate for one sex and not for the other.

The group interview process was very challenging on the one hand while exciting on the other. On the one hand, some teachers had very little to say when they responded to the questions, perhaps feeling that the situation was too tight on them.

The process of research on these teachers became difficult at this stage, especially when I was so eager for information. On the other hand, there were teachers who had way too much to say, to the extent that it became difficult for me to control the chat and bring it back to the interview guide. At this stage I also realized that allowing the discussion to go off route a bit, would lead to the unveiling of the unexpected themes, the possibility of which could not be ruled out. The very first question I asked them about sex and gender differences did not elucidate enough response, especially in the female group. Although the concepts were not that significant, one could sense little general understanding of issues of gender or a somewhat discomfort in the teachers to express themselves freely. The other possible reason for the silence could be the English language. I noticed some teachers struggling to speak English and this, I noticed that it affected the quality of their responses negatively.

In the male group interview, where the participation of group members was more informative and open, one could sense at the outset that there was a degree of acknowledgement of sex and gender differences in terms of treatment. Teachers indicated clearly that boys are naughty, there for they have to be disciplined all the time, causing teachers to spend more time with them as compared to girls. The male teachers seemed to feel more in control of the topic under discussion. They reflected freely on their pedagogy and the value attached to the gender dynamics of the classroom. In this way it became much easier for me to locate a few issues and themes that were central to my research, within this semi-controlled talk. In fact I saw my research design and my skills being tested against what Lynn Davies writes that:

It might be crucial for respondents to decide the direction of the discussion, in order to locate the themes they perceive to be central to their lives, and which therefore condition their

behaviors. ...Scientific exploration has left a legacy of the image of an interviewer as simply a neutral conduit through which facts and opinions can be noted—a kind of intelligent tape recorder. Yet what should distinguish an interview from a written questionnaire is the presence of the unscripted input, the steering, the personality, background and motivations of the interviewer (Davies, 1997:135).

OBSTACLES TO THE RESEARCH

This research was not without problems. When I went to Akatenya Combined School, it was unfortunate that the headmaster did not inform me at the outset that there would be second-year College teacher trainees, who were busy with their school-based activities. These trainee-teachers took over the classes, which I planned to observe, that way reducing the population of teachers I needed to research with. Even if they wanted to allow any other observer than their lecturers, it would too many people in the classroom. They did not qualify in terms of experience to be used for my research, as they were not experienced teachers.

Another setback was that even if I prepared my research the way Robinson (1984:52) did, for example to contact the teachers both for the interviews and observations before hand, I was never guaranteed of their full participation. Some of them withdrew and changed their mind shortly before the interviews. Others kept on making challenging comments. My research exercise faced a risk of sabotage through such comments, because comments could easily discourage those who were willing to participate. Why this happened is probably because, generally teachers do not want their classroom to be visited and they are not comfortable talking about their own practices.

On the other hand I was also fortunate because two teachers voluntarily decided to join the group discussion, although they were not primary phase teachers. Consequent to the withdrawal of some teachers and the giving up of classes to trainee teachers, I was left with a small population of teachers to observe and/or interview.

Another aspect that I counted as challenging, while engaged in this research is my dual role. I was caught in between my routine and official job and my role as a researcher. My work in the Namibian Ministry of Basic Education and Culture is that of an Education Officer who leads a team of Advisory Teachers. Although the image of an Advisory Teacher is perceived somewhat differently from that of a School Inspector, in the Ondangwa west region, these teams sometimes work together in carrying out teacher support activities. My role could easily be equated to that of an Inspector of schools, the role which teachers perceive as a way of controlling teaching practice.

This time I came in as a researcher. Even though I had clarified my role of the day, many teachers still expected me to play my official role. One teacher, a department head, insisted that I speak to their Grade 10 students one afternoon after my interviews, saying:

Mrs. Nambala, you Subject Advisors are seen only once in a lifetime. The last time you were here was when you came in a panel with our former inspector, to assess us for the training in Mathematics and Geography at UNAM the other time... Last year our performance in grade 10 was next to nil.... The Inspector only came to blame us for our failing to raise the pass rate. It was my wish that he spoke to them as well. Aanaskola mbano oya swaka nonuumvo [*These learners are dull even this year*]you have to tell them their role...(Field notes taken on 4/10/1999)

On another occasion, while I was leaving the staff room I overheard a female voice (talking in Oshindonga, the native language of the area in a mix of English and Afrikaans) from my back saying something like:

.....Aakwaita mbano otaye ku lombwele oresearch, maar hasho kaa. Opuna owala sha sha holama. Hasho yi ile ngawo, maar otwa ka mona owala taku popiwa overstaffing... [*These people (referring to the ministry officials) tell you one thing today, but they do the other thing for a hidden purpose, they came once and later we heard them talking of overstaffing at our school...*] (Field notes taken on 4/10/1999)

This is an indication that teachers perceived me as having come either for some administrative errand or to find fault with them. There had to be some hidden agenda. They have their fears. It

was a challenge to change my image and do a thorough research on aspects of classroom interaction. How could I change to a colleague again? My participation in a panel of inspectors already jeopardized my status and image. Even though I am an Advisory Teacher, I am still known as performance assessor. My observation was being equated with assessment of teaching practice.

It was another challenge to convince the teachers of Akatenya Combined School and make them understand the importance of this research and the role I play in the process. Even though I negotiated with them long beforehand, two teachers pulled out. One teacher just changed her mind shortly before the group interview was due to start, another one apologized for having to attend a funeral, which took place in a nearby Church. I had to do with a small population of teachers, especially the female group.

Ethnographic principles suggest that a researcher has to be in the field for a long duration. It was indicated earlier that this study was only two weeks, during which ten lessons were observed, two group interviews and three individual interviews conducted.

A DISPLAY AND ANALYSIS OF THE DATA

Qualitative research should be a research method implying quality, reliability and validity (Henning, 1993:114). These aspects of qualitative research are read from the way the data is presented. In order to enhance reliability and validity, Henning recommends that there is a need for a detailed account of the methodology and thorough record of raw data, to feature as a clear verbal formulation of information as acquired from the informants.

My research process was informed by this notion of qualitative research, in particular that of ethnography in the sense that I decided to document in a form of a thick, rounded and complete description of classroom life, which should eventuate in the deep understanding of how gender is at work in the classroom or otherwise.

The field notes and the tape recordings, which came out of classroom observations, group and individual interviews, were transcribed into reports, which in turn facilitated the identification

of the themes that emerged. My notes contain direct quotations of what people said, and as near as possible recalling (some of the notes were written after the interviews or observation were completed). These quotations are essential for capturing the gender dimension in the classroom environment. Another challenge was however that I could not find one specific rule or pattern of presenting my data.

What I found was presented in two major sections, interviews and classroom observation. Interviews revealed how teachers understood gender, what it meant for them and how it affected their daily interaction with boys and girls. Observations revealed what teachers actually did compare to what they said they do in theory. It was necessary to find whether there is a gap between what teachers say they do and what they actually do in the classroom. The various events and outcomes were presented under the headings, which shed light on the patterns of classroom interactions between teachers and their learners.

Overall, a systematic narrative qualitative analysis was used i.e. there was an attempt to describe how events proceeded, the actions taken and the motive behind them. In this context it enables one to understand inter-relationships of teachers and learners by making judgements about their actions. What was said and what was observed is herein presented as verbatim statements of people whose perspectives are under review, in this case, the teachers.

CONCLUSION

In this chapter, I explained how sexist practices were investigated in a few Namibian classrooms. Qualitative research methods were discussed and reasons were given as to why such techniques were employed. Classroom observations, group- and individual in-depth interviews, were highlighted as integral approach to researching classroom practice. In the next chapter is a display and interpretation of what was actually found through the research described in this section.

CHAPTER FOUR

TEACHERS AND THEIR LEARNERS IN THE CLASSROOM

INTRODUCTION

Sexism in its broadest sense was defined earlier in this thesis. The literature about it has often confirmed that it is formed through ideology and is concretized in practice (Weiner, 1991). Sexist practices and gender bias that teachers are socialized in, within their own society, is reproduced in the classroom (Kasanda and Shaimemanya, 1997). Such practices are embedded in teachers' attitudes, beliefs and values and are noticed in streaming, curriculum tracks, stereotyping and bias (Saha and Fagerlind, 1992), and these have shown as leading to variations in educational experience of girls and boys, with their negative features mostly felt by the girls. Literature has also indicated that teachers frequently are not aware that some of their classroom actions reinforce sexist attitudes, values and behaviours in learners they are teaching. It has also been proven that sometimes teachers, being unaware of their own bias, are not able to explain some of what they do.

This chapter is about what I actually learned through my research in the classroom, through interviews with teachers and the observation of their classes. The main purpose for going into the classroom was to find an answer to the question: Do teachers hold stereotypical views of their learners? What gendered practices are evident in the classroom? Do teachers purposely discriminate against girls because of the stereotypes they have about them as girls? How do teachers explain what they say and do to boys and girls? The research therefore explores whether classroom and especially the teachers, as an integral part of the classroom setting, are implicated in the construction of gender ideology and perpetuation thereof.

In the presentation of what I found, I begin with aspects that I found to be standard and common practice in classrooms I visited. These are, for example, class registers, seating arrangement, lining up when entering the classroom, and other rules, regulations and routines, which are

presumed to be normal for this specific school and the classrooms observed. While some of what transpired may confirm some if not all of what literature points out as sexist, other aspects could prove literature claims to the contrary.

The chapter proceeds with a presentation and analysis of the findings, which features as result of the group interviews and classroom observations. Group interviews were focusing on exploring the teachers' beliefs and ideas about gender relations in society and in school and also on finding the differences between perceptions about boys and girls. Classroom observations aimed at finding out about what teachers do as standard practice with and for their learners. Individual interviews supplemented the observations as a way of bridging the gap between what teachers said they do and what they actually do and the reason for doing so. Individual interviews sought explanations of teachers' actions.

TEACHERS' UNDERSTANDING GENDER AND SEX

Teachers were interviewed in groups of females and males separately, but were asked the same questions. An interview guide, or rather a list of preset questions, was used, but follow-up or probing questions came up depending on the responses to questions as the discussion progressed. The group discussion was aimed at obtaining the information regarding the degree to which teachers perceived gender patterns in their classrooms. The interview guide contained questions about gender differences in performance, participation in daily activities of the classroom, innate characteristics of boys and girls, basically what teachers thought about their learners in terms of day-to-day interactions.

Teachers were asked to distinguish between sex and gender and whether these were considered as binding when it comes to classroom practice of the participating teachers. With this question I was exploring teachers' emotions and ideas about gender relations. I expected teachers to simply express what gender meant to them and whether it was a significant issue in their teaching.

While some of the group interviewees showed an understanding of the difference between sex and gender, some others felt that explaining the two concepts was very difficult. The group indicated that gender meant that there were social differences between men and women, which society made and can be changed. Sex meant that there were biological differences which nature dictates to men and women, and these cannot be changed. Some teachers when talking about gender in terms of roles of men and women in society, referred to its associates, namely equity and equality, equal opportunity, oppression and discrimination of women by men and other concepts. Teachers expressed themselves about the meaning of gender and sex saying (all the names have been changed):

- Paulus: The only time I hear gender is people talking about women liberation women are very angry with us men they want freedom...
- Katwali: Democratic, democratic to both boys and girls... how to allocate tasks to them in order not to cause conflict
- Natango: Gender mean sex ...Sex mean gender...Yes, treatment, equal treatment
For boys and girls
- Mweya: It means (gender) equality or balance.
- Diina: I think it is about when as a teacher, you are only asking the boys, you are expected to balance...look at both sides and give chance to boys and girls...
- Nambahu: Everybody should contribute in class. I was just concerned about balance, as a teacher, you give a chance to all learners to talk and express their views.

The next part of the group discussion was aimed at tapping teachers' perceptions about gender roles and expectations. The following is a presentation of what group discussions yielded regarding the teachers' perceptions, attitudes, beliefs and some of their practices.

TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS AND PRACTICES TOWARD LEARNERS

In order to determine and or assess the significance of gender in teachers' views of their learners, we rely on the responses we get from them. This part of the discussion was done through 'the gender game'. The game was adopted from Ellis and Llewellyn (1997:156), and it

was used as a stimulus to assess and evaluate teachers' perceptions of their learners. The game was as follows:

A list of words was selected to represent games that boys and girls play; and career fields associated and believed to have a gender image, and which they are expected to take as adults. At the outset the participants were given three cards in the colours of blue, pink and yellow. It was then agreed between the interviewer and the participants what the colours should represent in terms of the sex of a child. The agreement was: blue for boys, pink for girls and yellow for both girls and boys. The words were then read out to the participants.

After each word the teachers were to raise a card, either a blue (for boys), pink (for girls) or yellow (for both boys and girls) card, which they thought could be associated with the word they hear from the interviewer. The interviewer records the number of people who hold that view and immediately follows up with a question that asks for the teachers to motivate their choice.

The responses to the game is summarized in the table below:

WORDS CALLED OUT	MALE GROUP			FEMALE GROUP		
	BLUE (boys)	PINK (girls)	YELLOW (both)	BLUE (boys)	PINK (girls)	YELLOW (both)
Football	4	1	1	4	1	0
Baby-doll	1	6	0	0	5	0
Computer	2	1	3	1	4	0
Bow and arrow	6	0	0	5	0	0
Teacher	0	1	5	0	1	4
Nurse	1	4	1	2	2	1
Doctor	2	3	1	3	0	2
Pounding millet	2	3	1	2	3	2
Science and mathematics	4	2	0	1	1	3
Playing house	2	1	3	1	2	2

Table 1: Understanding gender and how it is constructed. Adapted from Ellis and Llewellyn (1997).

The table above is a reflection of what teachers saw as gender appropriate. The items used represent sports games, both for home and school, the occupational fields and responsibilities which boys and girls are likely to take as adults. As pointed out earlier in this section, the teachers' views are coloured by a set of complex and traditional notions about gender. In teachers' views, certain things are either masculine or feminine. Teachers' responses could be based on what teachers played when they were young and what they see today as a norm for boys and girls they deal with on a daily basis. In Namibia today football or soccer games are played predominantly by men, but three respondents indicated that it is open for women, which is "a very recent development in some Namibian communities," as one female teacher put it.

Bow and arrow is associated with hunting, the job for men in traditional societies in Namibia and elsewhere in the world. In this context, bow and arrow became a taboo for women and girls.

One other item, in which interesting issues of gender were raised, was in the case of playing-house. While some teachers considered it a feminine issue, others teachers felt that boys too are nowadays getting interested in playing with their female counterparts, especially at the age younger than Grade 4.

One of the female teachers commented on this as follows:

Only small children play house. Only girls mostly, but not boys at the age group at Grade 5. Even Grade 5 level learners for example, no girl will want to be called a wife when boys are present. When they play alone, yes, you can see them having making baby-dolls...We make them with girls in my Craft class..."...Child-care is an important job for women. There is no way they can escape from it. Girls even take care of their siblings at home (Interview, 13 October 1999).

When it comes to occupational fields, nursing, for example, has been considered a female occupation. "Very few men have taken this as occupation. Only recently has Namibia noticed a change in attitudes of men. There are a number of them that feel it is their profession as well",

remarked one female teacher. According to a view expressed by the group interviewees, Namibian men taking nursing for a profession is a matter of the 90s. A male teacher commented as follows:

When I was growing up, there were no male nurses, but all the doctors were male, except some few females who came from Finland to work as missionaries in the church...it is better with teaching. This one is a job for both males and females (Interview, 13 October 1999).

GENDER ROLES AND CLASSROOM PRACTICE

Teachers were also asked similar questions about whom they would think is suitable to perform some classroom tasks, including class captains and group activity leaders, sweeping floors, arranging desks, cleaning chalkboards. The most interesting issues that featured in the discussion about this, was the traditional view, which teachers demonstrated through their responses. It was interesting to notice that teachers' views confirm the documented "domestic code" (Ellis and Llewellyn, 1997:83), under which the home is defined as a woman's place and the public sphere of work and power as men's world.

The majority of teachers interviewed said that girls are more suited to sweeping floors, because traditionally it is women who use brooms to clean the houses they live in. A classroom task, which the majority of the teachers thought was for boys only, is dusting the chalkboard. Four teachers responded to this question reflecting different views.

While some teachers hold the stereotypical view of male and females, others strongly believe that gender roles have to, and are changing rapidly. Teachers who responded to the question, about whom teachers would appoint to be class captain, all but one, declared that leadership roles should be assigned to both sexes. The table below is indicative of the teachers' views on classroom gender roles:

CLASSROOM TASKS	MALE TEACHERS			FEMALE TEACHERS		
	BOY	GIRL	BOTH	BOY	GIRL	BOTH
Dusting chalkboard	1	2	3	1	2	2
Sweeping floor	0	2	4	0	2	3
Emptying waste basket	0	2	4	1	1	3
Ringing bell	0	0	6	0	0	5
Class captain	1	1	4	0	0	5
Group activity leader	6	0	0	0	0	5

Table 2: Classroom gender tasks assignment

It is very interesting that the issue of classroom leadership at this school is allocated to both boys and girls. In four out of the six classes visited, there were four girl class captains and only two boys in Grades 5 and 7 serving the same role.

When teachers were asked whom they would assign the class captain job, nine out of eleven teachers felt that both could be used for leadership. The other two teachers' views are indicative of the fact that traditional concept of gender coexists with the new concept, the latter reflecting the changing gender roles. The latter encourages women and girls to consider themselves strong, in order to participate fully and confidently.

The table above also illustrates a variation in teachers' opinion about who exactly does what in and for the class. While half of the teachers interviewed felt that, for the sake of equality, the dusting of the chalkboard should be done by both girls and boys, other teachers had a different opinion on the issue. Those who had a different opinion said that, it is rather a matter of height or a suitability to do dirty work. Three teachers are cited on this aspect:

Paul: They have to be equalized.

John: Boys, because some of them are taller than the ladies, so they can able to clean the board. Girls like cleanliness on the body, (to clean the chalk board) is dirty work.

Paul: I disagree with that. Because cleaning chalkboard is part of job condition, both must be taught to clean...(Group Interview, 13 October 1999)

The female teachers on the other hand had yet another view, which applies also to the sweeping of floors. This view is based on the tradition and culture of most communities in the northern part of Namibia. According to this tradition, men should not touch brooms, because it does something bad to their manhood. With this notion in mind, female teachers feel it is not bad if girls have to sweep floors, especially with the traditional brooms. Therefore Namutenya said: "Women are to clean the house. Even at home they use to clean the house. Boys should not touch the sweeper, it is bad for men..." [the group laughs].

In three classes where I witnessed the cleaning of the classroom, I found that girls are doing most if not all of the sweeping, while boys did other tasks like shifting, lifting and moving the classroom furniture. On this issue I recorded the following scenario:

The morning assembly is over. The first lesson in Grade 6A is about to start. The teacher ordered the learners to enter the room, while she and the observer waited outside. The teacher looked around and found that there were palm fronds still lying around and between rows of desks. Some of the desks were still arranged in big working tables from the previous lesson.

Teacher: Class, lets clean up a bit. Class captain why did you not tell the cleaners of the day?

Class captain (a girl): The teacher comes and we went to PE. After that people just went home.

The next 5-7 minutes was spent on cleaning and rearranging the room. The girls swept the floor, and the boys lifted and moved the desks and chairs.

The class captain spoke, in the vernacular, to a group of playful boys and girls saying: "tu opalekeni ne, ethimbo olya ya" [let's clean up you people, the time is ticking away]. The teacher noticed the captain's action and said: " Good captain, you did well." The cleanup was concluded with some girls having picked up the last traces of palm leaves, while the boys took the trash box outside to a pit some 50m away, but in the schoolyard. (Fieldnotes, 9 October 1999).

On the issue of who does what in the classroom, and based on what the teachers say they do and what they actually do, one can conclude that the tasks allocated to learners are indicative of the teacher's perception of masculine and feminine roles. There is evidence of masculine and feminine bias. Boys have to do heavy-duty work, while girls take the lighter load.

ATTRIBUTES, CHARACTERISTICS AND BEHAVIOUR OF GIRLS AND BOYS

The group interview with teachers also discussed boys' and girls' characteristics these issues: dominance, quietness, obedience. Teachers who were interviewed almost confirmed what Wolpe has documented. Teachers articulated that children behave the way society expected them to. For example both the males and females group interview revealed that differences in the personalities and behaviors exist in schoolgirls and boys alike. In most of the teachers' opinions, the dominant characteristics of girls are that girls are quiet, and full of simplicity and sincerity. They have the patience, gentleness, zeal and affection necessary to maintain classroom order and to make other classmates' lives easier. On the other hand boys are troublemakers, aggressive, domineering and careless.

When the teachers were asked to describe their learners in terms of innate characteristics, their responses revealed the following:

Interviewer: Let us talk about differences between boys and girls. How do you describe the girls and boys in your classrooms? What kind of people are they?

Diina: Normally girls do not make a noise. According to my observation in my classroom, some of them are very weak in performance. Boys dominate them. Even when a girl knows a lot, she cannot participate according to what you ask him... her. Maybe boys dominate them or maybe they are shy.

Interviewer: (Looking for more opinion on the issues raised) How do boys dominate girls? Is this a problem in your classes as well? Are you also saying that the girls are shy?

[At this moment all the group participants felt like saying something, either in confirmation and or to the contrary about girls' shyness.]

Nangula and Namutenya: (together) Not really. Girls are not all shy.

Diina: On domination, wait , I have this to say:
No, no, no, boys dominate, because they want they are the only ones only to speak. Even when the girl wants to say something, he says it before the girl mentions it. In that way, whenever the girl wanted to say it, it is the boy who says it.

Interviewer: Do the boys sometimes put girls down?

Diina: (almost dominating the discussion) For example, if a girl wanted to say something, they (boys) start to make all kinds of noises like ah.. ah ah...[the teacher said this while her face displayed a disgusted look] The girl remain quiet or hold on to what she wanted to say, because the boys always expect them to make a mistake...

Interviewer: What do you do if you come across the kind of behavior ?

Mweya: Sometime you make him sit down and give the girls more chance to finish their sentence.

Diina: Sometimes a lot of time gets lost if you keep disciplining the boys. Sometimes you ignore and continue with the lesson, but the poor girls....{ laughter from the group]

Interviewer: Are there girls who behave badly?

Diina: Some girls behave badly also.

Interviewer: How? Can you elaborate on that?

Diina: They keep information to them selves and the boys get fed up and shout the answers instead.

The group discussion with the male teachers also has revealed the same sentiment when they were asked the same question.

- Katwali: I describe my male learners as naughty, who always need more direction as compared to girls.
- Interviewer: In what aspects do they need more guidance?
- Katwali: In learning. I have a problem with boys always...they are the only ones who commit crimes. They can destroy government properties, breaking chairs, throwing, shooting and smashing windows...they are lazy to do the homework.
- Paul: And one more additional, girls have love. They receive love from their mothers at home. When they come to school, they are goodhearted.

TEACHERS ON LEARNERS' CLASSROOM PERFORMANCE

When teachers were asked whether there were differences in classroom performance or specific educational skills, they agreed that there are differences between girls and boys, but the differences are not significant to warrant a declaration, because “they are not tested”, as one teacher puts it, and thus cannot be associated with intelligence or the opposite. Another male teacher on the other hand thought that the differences are real and are rather inferred from everyday classroom performance, which is a matter of intelligence. “You can only look and think that he is intelligent guy. You look at the marks he gets every day compared to the marks of the girls.”

One male teacher for Mathematics felt that there are overlaps between the sexes and there are certain things that are more likely to affect boys than girls and vice versa. A female felt that girls have more language skills than boys. A male teacher supported this view saying: “Girls read well, and they also speak better than boys, maybe not so good at writing.” A female teacher disputed this view and she said: No, in my class, Aletta is good at both reading and writing, but she is shy at speaking”. Another male teacher thought that normally girls are good listeners, “especially if you (the teacher) have to read a paragraph for them, girls are good at concentrating and they will give you what you wanted for the listening skill activity”.

Although girls perform equally well in Mathematics and Science, their interest in these fields is not explicit as compared to boys. Diina, the Grade 7 Science teacher, put it as follows:

Girls are not as inquisitive like boys. They do things as they come and for the sake of the subject only. If one lesson shows very interesting things, it is boys who show it. For example one day we were doing some experiment about chemical reactions with the Grade 10s using some compound containing sulphur. When burned above water, it ignites and causes the class to flee the room. Some of my girls were really terrified, boys were eager to do more about it. Some of them said they wanted to make a bomb...this is not only destructive but I think the whole subject is just too masculine...(Interview, 13 October 1999)

Other views were expressed with regard to the differences between boys and girls. On the issue of intelligence the teachers have responded as follows:

- John: Boys are intelligent. They are more intelligent than the girls. The problem is only that they used to absent from school.
- Natango: As far as [I can] contribute, if parents are taught to take their children, then I think boys are more intelligent than girls.
- Interviewer: In which subjects are the boys skillful?
- Natango: I cannot say.
- Interviewer: In which subjects are the boys more skillful than girls?
- Namutenya: Craft and Technology and Arts.
- Mweya: In Geography.
- Diina: In Mathematics, my girls can do the same as boys. Yes, in this case maybe boys are doing better than girls.
- Interviewer: What is that which boys do better?
- Diina: Boys are good at drawing.

Based on the above citation teachers described their learners' differences in many ways. They made statements about what girls and boys can do and what they cannot do. In the next section I present the outcome of the classroom observations I did at Akatenya Combined School.

CLASSROOM PRACTICES

Class registrations

The practice of teachers entering learners in the class register in separate lists according to sex was documented by Jane French (1990). French writes that it is universally acceptable. The reason for the practice simply to observe the fact that society divides people according to sex, and most of the operations are done according to this divide. The school as part of the society therefore reflects general attitudes, as well as stereotypical notions and assumptions with regard to sex and gender arrangements. Our point of interest is how teachers use this division and the value attached to it for educational practice. When Mr. Fudheni, a Mother Language teacher for Grade 7 at Akatenya Combined School, who is about to retire, was asked in an individual interview about separating learners in queuing up for classroom entry and registers. He responded that the system originated from olden days schools saying:

Since I started teaching in 1970, we found this practice in use. There should be a page for the boys and a page for the girls. The page for the boys should be first, and girls came second. Also in the marks sheets, the male students are on top of the list. It does not matter if they fail or pass...About the lines (meaning queues), it was also the same since long ago. Boys in their line and girls in theirs also. Girls have to go in the classroom first, because they are like children...No, no. no...they are respected. They say 'ladies first' and I do not have further explanation. (Interview, 13 October 1999)

The dress code

Another school policy, the school dress code, reflected a standard uniform to be worn by all the learners on a daily basis. Grey trousers or shorts for boys, maroon skirt for girls, and blue shirts and black shoes for both boys and girls. It is expected that every learners wears the uniform every day and there should be no question about it.

Entering the classroom

This routine is practised after any assemblies and breaks. In order to create order and a quiet atmosphere learners line up before they enter their classrooms. Two separate line-ups are formed, one for girls and the other for boys. Taller learners stand at the back and the shorter ones at the front. In an individual interview with the Grade 6 mathematics teacher on the 12 October 1999 about this practice, especially how learners feel about it, the teacher said that taller learners brag about their height, while shorter ones feel belittled.

According to the teacher:

Boys do not want to be short...these feelings can be defused by getting them to line up everywhere, irrespective of height and sex". If we mix them, sometimes it is problematic. Boys do not want to be at the front. They feel they are big men. (Individual interview with Natango, 12 October 1999)

While I was waiting to enter a Grade 5 classroom for a Mathematics lesson, a very interesting issue occurred. The learners had to enter as normal after the teacher had given them the signal to. Abed, the boy in front of the males' queue, jumped right in. The others waited hesitantly, some of them looking at the teacher, probably for a comment. They were not so sure whether they had to follow the boy who went in. Then Paul, a very young male teacher yelled at him:

Ahito, usually ladies go first, why you went right in I do not know. Are you a woman? [The class laughs at Abed] See how the others did not follow your example. You have to respect the woman of our class. Come out. (Fieldnotes, 12 October 1999)

Ahito came out giving way for the girls to enter as per the teacher's instruction. Much could be said about the observation highlighted above. Abed has violated the rule regarding the notion of 'ladies first'. This was not this teacher's rule, but a learned habit through socialization probably during the teacher's own experience at school.

When I talked to Paul individually later after his class, his view was only that the whole world practices this and it is accepted as normal if ladies entered rooms first before men. "Maybe it is

a sign of respect”, he said. However he was unable to articulate what it could mean either to girls or to boys.

Seating arrangements

Physical segregation of boys and girls was observed in the seating arrangements in the classrooms. In four out of six Grade 5-7 classrooms visited, learners were found sitting in groups according to sex. There were groups of girls and groups of boys. Activities were carried out as per this arrangement. In two classrooms, learners were seated in rows facing the teacher, whose table and chair was in the southern corner of the classroom, giving way for learners to use the chalkboard.

The rows were arranged according to sex, a row for girls and one for boys. In this arrangement, taller learners took the back seats of the class, while shorter once sat at the front.

There were only two cases where learners’ special needs had to be considered: the tallest girl in class had a hearing problem and as a result, sat at the front most desk, while a boy who was of medium height had to take a front seat because of his vision problem. In an informal conversation during the break, I asked two female teachers why girls and boys were seated in separately, and they responded saying:

Nangula: Sometimes you just have to separate them, because boys are naughty. If a boy sits behind a girl, he pinches and touch-touch on the hair. The girl gets angry, because of the disturbance.

Diina: Even in groups like the ones in grade 7, if the group has boys and girls the girls keep quiet because boys want to do everything. The girls have little chance for the activity. Boys dominate always. (Notes taken, 5 October 1999)

Gender roles and classroom errands

It was very interesting that teachers sent boys around more often than girls, sometimes referring to them as either stronger or maybe faster than girls. In three instances I saw boys running most of the classroom errands. These involved the 'go and fetch' things. A good example of this featured in Grade 7, where the teacher needed learners to go and get a box of tools from the staff room. She said:

I need two strong boys to fetch our science kit from the staff room. I need volunteers. Tulipohamba, Elago (both of whom were boys), please go and get the box for us. The secretary will show you where it is. Be careful it has fragile items (Field notes, 5 October 1999).

What the teachers said this time represent a strong stereotypical view of boys and girls. The broad society too expects men to be stronger than women. When the errand needed volunteers, one could only expect girls to also react, and probably be turned down, because it was not meant for them or else it is just too heavy so that only boys would be suitable to carry it. What message would they get about themselves?

The group interviews revealed teachers having stereotypical views of their learners, with regard to innate characteristics, classroom behaviour of boys and girls, as well as their academic abilities. Whereas girls were depicted as quiet and obedient, taking their class work seriously, though not so intelligent, boys on the other hand were said to be causing more disciplinary problems. They were seen as aggressive and dominating in many ways, at times keeping girls under their control. Despite these differences, teachers expressed that they are committed to equity and equality in treating their learners, depending on the circumstances surrounding the events taking place in the classroom at a specific time.

Given the differences spelled out by the teachers during the group interviews, in this part of my report I focus more on teachers' behaviour, especially when they have to deal with learners of different characteristics. My focus was based on the assumption that teacher behaviour plays a crucial role in the development and perpetuation of gender differences, a fact that is also

documented by Elisabeth Fennema and others (1998). This is so, because the teacher decides what should happen in the classroom and has control over the curriculum to be implemented. How does the teacher make use of his/her powers to facilitate learning?

This section substantiates two sides of one coin. On the one hand, I have to agree with a view expressed by Stanworth (1984:149) that there is a gap between what teachers say they do and what they actually do in practice. Teachers articulated that their classroom practice did not rest on a stereotyped notion of what boys and girls should be, but in actual sense they did. They acted or behaved on the basis of the “rational assessment of their learners’ individual traits”, as one teacher put it. On the other side, what I drew from my observation is that the notion of a discriminated girl is a reality, which has many faces. While having this view, it is another reality that my study has so far failed to identify explicitly issues which teachers do in favour of boys and to the expense of girls. The reason for the latter is that teachers’ behaviour varied. It was never consistent. It is related to certain situations in the classroom and also to learners’ behavior, and that is what I found in the classrooms at Akatenya.

The curriculum

The purpose of this thesis is not to look into the issues of curriculum, but it is still necessary to reflect on how the school curriculum could be implicated in the construction of the gendered practices at classroom level. In the light of the hidden curriculum, teachers need to be aware of the fact that, while they are teaching the overt curriculum, there is another one, which is not planned and it may convey a different message, which promotes sexist thinking. The Craft and Technology lessons I observed in Grade 6 are indicative of the overt and the hidden curriculum. In this subject teachers transmitted sex stereotypes, despite their well-articulated commitment to promoting commitment to sex equity. The lesson presented below, is indicative of the fact that teachers are not aware of the message they transmit through their classroom practice.

The subject, Craft and Technology is taught in Grades 4-7. It is optional with Home Ecology and Elementary Agriculture. Each learner at Upper Primary Phase level should take one of the three subjects (Pilot Curriculum Guide for Basic Education, MBEC,1996). The curriculum

policy does not prescribe crafts for boys or girls. The teacher decides what crafts to make in the class. The following extract is taken from grade 5 and 6 Craft and Technology lessons I observed on 11 October 1999. It is recorded as follows:

The teacher's daily preparation book indicated that there were crafts to be made. The learners have just finished rearranging their class desks to make bigger working tables, which suited the lesson activities. The teacher commended the class for the job well done in regrouping the desks. She then continued to speak to them saying:

Today's lesson is about making hats and baskets. Can anyone tell me what hats are used for? (She calls on Lena who sits closest to her.)

Lena: Hats are for men. Father has a hat for going to herd cattle.

Teacher: Anyone else? I think I have seen women wearing hats in church, right class?

Class. (in choir) Yes!

Teacher: What about baskets?

(The class remains quiet for a while. Two girls look at one another and smile. One points a finger at her class mate and I thought I have heard her saying 'for you', while pointing at her mate.) Aina laughs softly while putting a hand on her mouth. The teacher sees them and moves swiftly toward the two girls' desk.)

Teacher: Aina, for who/ for me?

Aina: No, 'juffrou' for Dina.

Teacher: Do you agree that baskets are for people like Dina? What do you think baskets are for?

Dina: (stands up unwillingly, frowning at the class, and said audibly: Baskets are for 'mahangu' (an Oshiwambo word for millet, which is a staple food crop grown in the northern part of Namibia).

Teacher: Thank you for your answer, Dina, but you did not have to frown at us.

The class continued with more learners' discussion about baskets and mahangu.

Teacher: Let me now show you how to make a hat, using palm leaves. I am going to show the boys first. (Classroom observation; 11 October 1999)

Having witnessed the initial discussion about hats and baskets and the way the teacher has demonstrated to her learners, I immediately felt like asking why boys first; what the teacher felt about boys doing what is for men and girls doing a piece of craft that was associated with women's household chores. Later on the same day I interviewed the teachers about my observation regarding this specific lesson. I asked the first teacher a series of questions including why her learners were seated in groups according to sex; why she chose to start her demonstration with boys and not girls; and why the activities were done according to the sex of the group members and what the curriculum guide says about boys' and girls' crafts. Her response was as follows:

I wanted to show the boys first, because boys are often out of control,...most of the boys do not concentrate, therefore I wanted to make them busy, so that when I am busy with the girls, boys do not have to disrupt.

Why males and females in separate groups...I do not think about specific reason. Normally I sit them mixed, but today this is a different arrangement about this lesson...people making hats together and baskets together.

...Yes it is true, the syllabus does not say what boys or girls should learn, but I plan and decide what to for that specific lesson...the boys do not want to do the baskets, they are hard for them , and it requires a heavy concentration...they only want to do things like cars, and other metal work..., but I think girls can do everything, also make things from metals as long as you show them.

No, boys cannot be seen carrying a basket, it is women stuff [short silence] even if they do not tell you loud, they still do not want to.

When I asked at the beginning about the use of the basket, I only wanted to tell them of the true fact that baskets are for use by women in the home. Men use them too when they help out with some of the chores like harvesting...For my boys there should be nothing to be ashamed of...

My curriculum does not mean to discriminate or stereotype anybody of my learners, it is for all...education for all. (Individual interview with Nangula, grade 6 Craft and Technology teacher, 10 October 1999)

The second lesson in the same subject in Grade 5 was observed where a young teacher, Namutenya was teaching almost the same skills. This time girls in her class made baby dolls, while boys did floor mats. I noticed a similar behaviour as the one of Nangula's class. Namutenya's boys preferred mats to dolls. When I interviewed her individually on the same day, asking her why she chose dolls for girls and mats for boys, she said her choice was based on learners' interests:

You see at the beginning of my lesson, I asked them to make a choice between the two. That little boy, Lukas said he is not a mother. You heard him. Many other boys feel the same. And also Teopolina said she already knew how to make baby dolls because her mother taught her to do them...

Now what if they are not just interested, I gave them, but they all had a choice, I do not see devastation if my girl are doing what they are interested in...it is important that I work according to interest...(Individual interview with Namuteya, a grade 5 Craft and Technology teacher, 11 October 1999)

Even though that these lessons were chosen according to children's interests, it could possibly not be taken for granted that the teacher should stand aloof and watch how girls learn to make baskets and care for children, a role they can not overlook by virtue of reproduction.

In an individual interview with Nangula and Namutenya about their lessons I questioned the purpose of boys making hats and they said respectively that it was for them to "wear it and wander around with friends", because apparently "boys have much time to be with friends, unlike girls who stay home to prepare food". When do boys learn to care for children as fathers, if gender roles have to be shared? In this case I see teachers' advocacy for gender equality being defied by their classroom practices.

Teachers and male dominance

Evidence was found of male dominance in classrooms at Akatenya Primary School. When teachers were interviewed in groups, the female teachers' group pointed out that male dominance was a real issue in their classrooms. I also observed one lesson fully and I counted the extent of dominance as expressed by Nangula in her response to questions during the group interview. In this very interactive lesson, 17 boys and 18 girls interacted. Sixty (60) turns were taken by the boys, half of which were grabbed by way of shouting out the answer before anybody else, even when there were people who had their hands raised. One teacher remarked in an individual interview saying:

Some of my girls do not want to talk in a group, because boys would shut them up, by dismissing their opinions. Brave girls shut them up too. We have dominant characters among girls too
(Individual interview with Diina, 14 October 1999).

The above quotation implies that girls were not really quiet to mean they cannot hit back. Girls are probably quiet to mean they are peaceful or prefer to be quiet rather than make a noise. It does not mean that they did not do the things that boys do.

Teachers and classroom discipline

When I interviewed teachers at Akatenya Primary School in a group, they said that boys were really naughty and they have to be disciplined the most. During classroom observation at the same school, I found the same pattern in boys' and girls' behaviours. I also noticed that control and discipline was part of classroom norms. Various measures of discipline were taken, depending on the nature of what could be called an offence. At times it entailed using a raised tone of voice or using strong words like 'shut up'. One time a female Grade 5 teacher moved closer to a group of boys who pretended to be actively working on their assignment. She stood there staring at the most noisy boy of the group hoping that the boy would keep quiet after reading from his teacher's frowning face. To his surprise the boy would not respond to the teacher's gaze.

During a Mathematics lesson, a male teacher of Grade 7 had to wait until break time, so that he could talk to a boy called Daniel about his behavior. Daniel was seen showing other boys the knife he brought to class. When he was taken to the principal's office, he explained that he needed the knife to cut palm fronds for use in the Craft and Technology class. In an informal discussion with the Craft and Technology teacher on the 10 October 1999, about the issue, palm fronds were not supposed to be cut that same day they are used. They are normally cut two days before the lesson, because they are dried before use.

On the issue of discipline, teachers were explicit about the gender differences they have to deal with. All the teachers interviewed expressed the sentiment that it is much easier for anybody to deal with girls, for the fact that they are easy to control, which is not the same for boys. This fact was observed in Nangula's Craft and Technology class, which I referred to earlier.

What Nangula did for discipline was recorded as follows:

The class was very noisy. It was difficult for some boys to keep to task. A boy ripped apart the hat he started on. He threw it away and moves to another group. The teacher was somewhat annoyed by the boy's move. She moved to the group where the boy was. She stood very close to him, put her hand on the boy's head and pushed him real hard, without saying a word. The boy realized that the teacher was angry. He then moved back to his original seat. For the next ten minutes or so, the teacher remained at this table, but her focus was on the boy who just moved back to his seat...

The teacher seemed to forget that the girls' tables were not visited for the last 30 minutes of the period ...I noticed that girls were not fully at work either. Laimi (a girl, I learned to know as business person, from the Mathematics lesson with Mr. Paul) grabbed another person's baby doll in the making and threw it, causing the whole table to burst into laughter. The teacher realized that the class was getting bored with making dolls and mats. She ignored the girls' laughter and ordered the class to take a break instead. (Fieldnotes, 10 October 1999)

On disciplining boys and girls, Nangula said:

It is always difficult to work with boys, because they are so active [but over the limits] and independent. On the other side, you can easily suppress the girls, they listen to you. For girls you can ignore them if they misbehave and they will realize for themselves. Later they will keep quiet. For boys, no, you have to be strict control them. Girls obey the rules...(Individual interview, 10 October 1999)

Based on the quotation above there is the notion of compliance on the part of girls and the opposite for boys, the behaviour that the teachers have to work on. In this case the teacher ignores the girls' indiscipline in anticipation of self-control from their side, while using stricter measures to do the same for boys, using their expected behavior of compliance.

Language

When I went to Akatenya Combined School for this study I was looking for teachers' language formulations, for example to praise their learners, to reprimand and to address them as a matter of routine. I was also under the understanding from other educational researchers that the teacher use language to regulate, silence and to structure learning (Weiler,1988), the effect of which is felt by female learners.

What I found is supported by Desai (1989:9) who points out that patterns of speech are rooted in a society where men have more power than women and indeed power over women. In a group interview with the teachers at Akatenya Combined School, it was clearly indicated that boys in their classes use abusive language to girls, which literally silences girls. Diina, the Science teacher in Grade 7, indicated that girls' participation in classroom activities is severely undermined by the boys' habit of grabbing chances and shouting out answers, in spite of whether it is a girl who has the floor at that specific time. Although this study was not able to attach statistical significance, the extent to which this is prevalent is very high. It is only notable that teachers ignore the fact that it is happening and needs to be challenged.

The following extracts were noted during different lesson proceedings and are used here as examples of teachers' language formulations in different circumstances and situations during lessons proceedings. The extracts focuses on two categories, namely praise and reprimand.

Praise

The instructional process was characterized by evaluative feedback which follows the teacher's question and the student response to it. In my observations I noticed that teachers have some common expressions they used to praise, accept or disapprove of the student response, to provide remediation or to demand for a better answer. To praise learners, most teachers said to their learners "Very Good, Neat Work, Splendid, Perfect, Job-well-done, Keep it up" and many others. At times praises are said when correct answers are given. Others are written in learners' exercise books. These listed ones were used in almost all the classes I observed and they were used to praise boys and girls. The following quotation was taken from observation notes about Paulus's Grade 7 lessons:

At the end of the day's lesson, exercise books have to be collected. Beata, the class captain knows her job and promises the teacher that she will deliver the books after everybody has handed in theirs. The teacher hanging around, while waiting for the next teacher to arrive talks to the class captain saying: "You are doing good, Beata, keep it up".

When the teacher said that to Beata, a boy, called Ahito yelled real loud and said jokingly: "She is too short for a captain". Teacher: "That's not good for you to say that." Ahito, doing work is not about how tall you are, it is about what you are able to do, OK!"

In this case the teacher intended to extend a word of praise to one of the learners, who happened to be a class captain. Like teachers, learners also bring to class their own gender bias, which could have been learned from earlier socialization. Ahito perceives leadership to be a matter of height, and probably because a woman's role is to keep the home, Ahito thinks that for a girl to play a role of leadership is dysfunctional.

Teachers extended words of praise and or encouragement to boys and girls. What was remarkable, was that the things that they were praised for reflected sex differences. Many

teachers were praising girls more than they did for boys. Girls were praised for their good behavior (Craft and Technology), their good reading skills (Mother language), nice handwriting (English 2nd language). About handwriting, an English language teacher asked out loud: Why is it that girls have the nice handwriting all the time? A boy stood up, yawned and stretched out his arms and shouted back in agreement: “Yes, girls have nice handwriting.”

Words of encouragement were mostly directed to girls than to boys. It was probably a matter of underachievement, disengagement or quietness on the part of girls than it was the case with boys. A number of teachers also encouraged girls to get actively engaged in conversations during the lesson, especially during group discussions. On this aspect I recorded the following example from a grade six Natural Science and Health Education class taught by a male teacher, who calls himself, Mr. Science. Mr. Science went around posing revision questions. Five questions were answered by boys, one after the other, some of them shouting out loudly. The teacher then turned to a girl, saying:

Mr. Science: No answer from you, Emilia. Say something. Why are so quiet? Tell me why do we need to keep clean? Why do we wash ourselves?

Emilia: To avoid diseases, to wash away dirt.

Teacher: Perfect. You have to raise your hand. Do not keep good answers to yourself.

Teacher: More girls, more girls...

This teacher wanted as many girls as possible to answer questions, only after they have raised their hands as classroom rule. The only difference was that the five boys who responded to earlier questions did not raise their hands. Neither did the teacher tell them to, if that was expected from them as well.

Reprimand

Teachers also reprimanded their misbehaving learners on the spot. The following words were used for this purpose:

- Paul: Hey, sit down immediately, the bell has not gone yet!
- Mr. Science: Shut up, Joel or do that outside!
- Vicky: Asser, this is not funny, how dare you laugh like a baboon?
- Vicky: You two over there, classroom is not a dining room, OK !

When two other teachers reprimanded their learners or discouraged them from certain things, they compared them to the opposite sex. One example of this was observed, when two girls were talking to each other in class forgetting that their voices were loud. The teacher noticed it and said to them: “Veronica and your friend you decided to make a noise like boys, er? I am not used to you doing that. Please work, not talk!”

This sounded as if it was boys only who make a noise or else it was acceptable for boys to talk loudly in class.

Two other teachers used sticks to softly hit learners on their heads. One teacher used a ruler and did the same. Another teacher used a book and threw it to a boy who was reaching out to another boy’s pen. Mr. Science ordered a boy called Daniel to lift up a chair and keep it in the air for ten minutes, for stealing food from Anna’s backpack, saying: “I want you to keep this one in the air, and by the time the twenty minutes lapse, you will be hungry like Anna whose bread you took.”

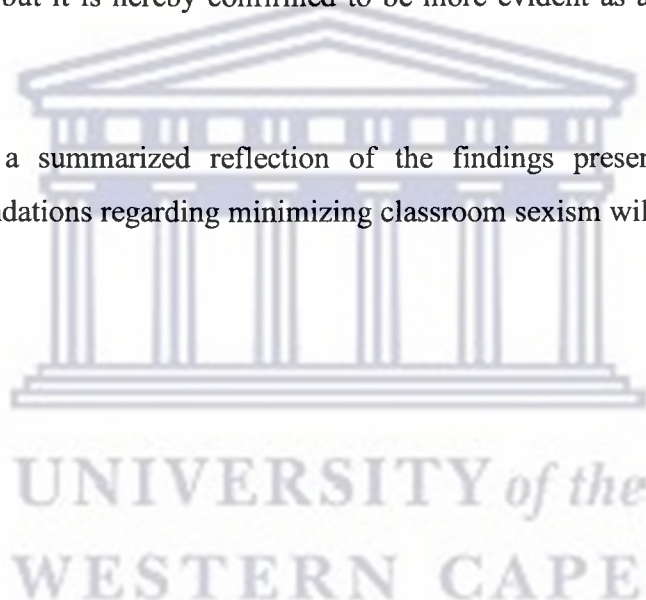
One other difference I noticed when teachers had to say reprimanding statements was that teachers spoke in raised tone when speaking to boys and they appeared angrier compared to when they had to do the same for girls.

In general, teachers’ daily language is full of the pronouns ‘he’ and ‘she’, with ‘he’ coming first. Even though this is the case, one could notice that, where ‘he’ was used before ‘she’, it probably happened because the English language uses these words in this order naturally. Moreover, the differences that occurred were probably followed from the messages that were to be communicated.

CONCLUSION

This chapter has provided information on the extent of sexism and gender bias in the teachers' classroom practices and interaction between them and their learners. Significant differences were found in teachers' approaches and practices and in different circumstances of boys and girls interacting with their teachers in the various subjects at different grade levels and classrooms. Finding an explanation why teachers do what they do in the classroom was a high priority for me in my research. One is prompted to conclude that sexism is not easy to observe in classroom practice, but it is hereby confirmed to be more evident as a reflection of what is not planned.

The next chapter is a summarized reflection of the findings presented in this chapter. Suggestions recommendations regarding minimizing classroom sexism will also be made.



CHAPTER FIVE

TOWARD A SEXISM FREE CLASSROOM

INTRODUCTION

In this last chapter I reflect on the main findings presented in Chapter 4. Possible ways how to assist teachers to create a sexist free classroom atmosphere are herein explored and discussed. I then map out why it is necessary that we sensitise teachers about identifying gender needs by recognizing the changing gender roles and to conveying a clear message about new gender roles. Recommendations for further research are also made, based on the theoretical perspectives discussed in Chapter 2. The chapter ends with a conclusion for the overall study.

Sexism was identified as pervasive in the classrooms visited. A qualitative approach was taken to study it with the aim to reach an understanding in terms of how it is at works in the classroom setting. The remaining question is what should be done to assist teachers in realizing its effects on the students and to work toward minimizing its pervasiveness and to face it head-on. What approach do we entertain as viable? This chapter attempts an answer, even if it does not have to be a conclusive one. Before I come to what should be done about the problem in question, I briefly reflect on the main findings of this study.

MAIN THE FINDINGS

Teachers' understanding of gender and sex

The difference between the concepts gender and sex were adequately articulated. In their responses to interview questions, teachers indicated that they are committed to gender equity.

Even if they had to treat their learners differently, they indicated that they did not use the treatment as a strategy to exclude or to discriminate. Teachers clearly spelled out that their classroom practice is not driven by any discriminatory criterion and that they acted according to the interests of the learners, especially on issues pertaining to the learning objectives.

The classroom arrangements

It was in this study that classrooms are arranged according to sex. Learners are registered in separate lists of boys and girls. They enter the classroom in separate queues. In some classes girls sit with girls and boys with boys. If they had to work in groups, they were also according to gender. Both boys and girls behaved in the manner spelled out by their teachers.

The Curriculum

Gender bias was noticed in the in teaching and the curriculum. The Namibian broad curriculum for basic education sets the climate that favours gender equity, hence it does not prescribe what each of the sexes ought to do for learning. On this aspect of classroom practice, teachers directing their students into what they thought was gender appropriate for them, was commonplace. They used their own discretion to determine classroom content.

Home Ecology/ Craft and Technology lessons referred to in the previous chapter, the cooking, the baskets and 'mahangu' conversation, all these have reflected the domestic ideology. When interviewed individually, the Craft and Technology teachers indicated that they were right, when they directed girls and boys to activities appropriate for them, in so doing shaping them into better women and men and not give tasks that they would not cope with or which they were not interested in.

On the other hand, working according to interest is a very good practice. It only becomes dangerous if interests were shaped through stereotypical notions of gender. If girls had to do activities according to their interests, one would support the practice.

Girls have been observed to be in the passive position of acquiring appropriate sex-role behavior through being told what to do for their class assignments and tasks, through rewarding and punitive measures from their teachers. This position, in a way denies them the choice or the possibility of adopting alternative sex roles. Boys' activities are likely to encourage the outside world, whereas for the girls, the message is for them to keep the home.

Gender roles

The gender roles that were either spelled out by the interviewed teachers or those who were observed during classroom visits by the researcher, were found to have mirrored those of the larger society. Teachers' beliefs and expectations were driven by sexual stereotypes. There was a division of roles by gender. Boys were given activities which portrayed the out of home environment, for example, caring for cattle, hunting, going and fetch things for the class, and many others. Teachers thought most of the domestic activities, such as tilling land/gardening and watering plants, harvesting, sweeping floors, caring for children and many other functions, should be carried out by girls. In the two Craft and Technology lessons cited in Chapter 4, it was noted how girls were channeled into nurturant and subordinate roles of child caring and rearing, as well as overall housekeeping, while boys, were taking traditional role as family providers, and girls as housekeepers and caregivers.

Innate characteristics of boys and girls

All teachers involved in this research confirmed the fact that there were typical characteristics for boys and for girls. None of the teachers denied the fact that boys sometimes are aggressive as compared to girls.

Aspects of discipline

Teachers had to effect a lot of disciplinary contacts with boys, and it was during these actions that much could be read in terms of teachers' gender differentiated behavior. In most of the classes visited, disciplining a misbehaving learner was part of the instructional process. Lesson

presentation was always accompanied by teacher vigilance to constantly monitor learners' behavior. Teachers use different measures to discipline their learners, most of the time they go according to the stereotypical and expected behaviors of their learners.

Classroom observation revealed that girls did not give problem. They were quiet and therefore appreciated by their teachers. Being quiet, they displayed an image of indispensability to the extent that some teachers felt no need to interact with them, i.e. their quietness was taken to mean they even did not need teachers to control their class work. Some of the teachers observed, expected girls to be more compliant and obedient than their male counterparts.

Teachers reprimanded their learners by imposing sanctions on those who violated laws of the classroom. A boy who entered the classroom before the girls in his classroom has violated the law regarding the notion of 'ladies first'. Although this was not Paul, the teacher's view, it was a learned habit through the teachers' own socialization through schooling. In Paul's view, the whole world uses it and it was acceptable and normal if women went through passages before men.

Classroom performance

Teachers undervalued girls' intelligence and capabilities. Some teachers felt that girls in their classes did not have realistic aspirations and that they were less ambitious than their male counterparts. Some of them showed an interest in the domestic fields. This argument is dangerous if teachers use it to exclude some girls from technical fields and instead guide them into the domestic sphere. If the latter happens, then those girls will not be able to acquire credentials for entry into careers in technical fields.

Even though teachers saw the differences in academic abilities, they were unable to explain reasons for their views. It only left us with more questions as to what to do with the differences. Should we treat them accordingly? The answer to this is very complex, as it depends on a network of beliefs and not on the mere acceptance or rejection of the notion that boys are more

intelligent than girls are (Noddings, 1998:17). The focus for this study is not on boys and girls cognitive skills, but rather on what teachers do to deal with them.

Boys and girls participated, but most often the boys dominated, by way of grabbing chances and demanding extensive teacher attention. In order to attract the teacher's attention, learners are expected to raise hands. Boys did not adhere to this rule. Instead, they dominated classroom discussions, by grabbing chances extensively, that way making maximum use of the teacher's attention if not monopolizing it at the expense of girls. Teachers focused their attention on boys, whom teachers said have caused most of the disciplinary problems. As a result most of the time is spent on them.

The boy's behaviours may give us a clue why girls are quiet. Is it because they have nothing to say, or is it because someone else has the floor all the time? Why are the teachers not enforcing the rules of the classroom that everybody needs to raise their hands before they get the floor? If everybody is required to raise their hands before the floor becomes theirs, it has to be practised, so that every learner gets his/her fair share of participation in classroom activities. During the lessons in which male domination was observed teachers were aware that it was happening, but they ignored it irrespective of the fact that it might have a negative impact on the girls' participation in classroom activities. Is this not a way of silencing girls? Girls are paying a high price if they have to develop strategies to cope with the devaluing of their contribution, and this has a detrimental effect on their education at large.

It was also noticed that when girls could not attract the teachers' attention, they developed strategies to cope with the situation. The strategies they used include keeping quiet, not raising their hands, taking a back seat when group discussions are used for lesson presentation, withdrawing their total participation in classroom activities. When boys grabbed the chances, girls showed frustration, and did not challenge the domination. Keeping quiet could be declared a challenge in disguise.

It is questionable when teachers who are supposed to be there for all the learners, keep aloof and watch. It is at this point that I agree with June Larkin (1997:15) who writes that "when girls are

unable to participate fully in school life, they are less likely to develop the skills, the power, and the confidence to succeed in the outside world.”

Boys were observed to be more troublesome than girls. As a result, the teacher’s instructional process becomes focused on the boys, with disciplinary contacts almost dominating the process. According to Nangula, it is only normal for teachers to spend most of the time disciplining boys, while they find it intolerable if girls started to behave in the same way. On the other hand the quiet girl is left on her own, to the extent that nothing is done to her, even if she was not fully at work either. There were times when girls made a lot of noise as well. In one instance the teacher, intolerant of the girls’ trouble making, dismissed the class instead, without showing the girls that it was unacceptable behavior.

Having this view, what is it that we need to change in society? Should we change the way society constructs masculinity or femininity? Who should live up to which standards, who does society attack for whom they are, is it boys for being aggressive or girls for being quiet and not so good at Science and Mathematics (Fennema, 1998; Noddings, 1998)? What if girls are not interested in these subjects? In her paper on Perspectives from Feminist Philosophy, Noddings asked a whole range of questions whether it is necessary to investigate all possible suspects about boys and girls being or unable to do this and that. She then presented an argument in defense of probing more on the issue of interest saying:

If it was true that girls are less interested in maths, so what? What would follow? Clearly we still could not judge the next female or male who walks into our classroom on the basis of this generalization. Should we provide compensatory work and reward the girls to increase their interest? (Noddings1998:17)

Differential treatment

What teachers believed about gender influenced their behavior. Teachers acknowledged the fact that they treated boys and girls differently, depending on the circumstances surrounding the

treatment. Teachers emphasized dissimilarity between boys and girls. Teachers also used differentiated strategies to deal with the class of the intelligent and indisciplined male learner, and the not-so-intelligent, quiet and obedient females in their classes. The observation made by Stanworth (1984) is true that the approach teachers take, could be translated into actions, which have the effect of polarizing girls. What teachers say may be a reflection of their own way of looking at gender and academic abilities and capabilities. Maybe boys are more intelligent than girls. One teachers emphasized the point that by spending more time with the boys, they never meant to exclude girls, but they were only putting in an extra effort required in order to bring up a more balanced and self-disciplined boys. The teacher said further that girls did not need as much disciplinary contacts like boys, as they were already self-disciplined.

Teachers sent boys around more than they did for girls. Boys volunteered also for errands, while girls did it only when they saw that there was no boy who volunteered.

Verbal interactions

Sexist language was very minimal in the visited classroom interactions. It was rather what people of the classroom did than what they said which reflected sexist attitudes, be it students or teachers. Incidents of boys demeaning girls were cited. Boys reflected on girls not suitable for leadership roles. An example for this was the boy who shouted out of jealousy: “ but she is too short for a class captain”, and unable to realize that class captaincy requires only mental capacity rather than a physical one.

Teachers did not use any discriminatory criterion when their learners deserved a word of praise, appreciation or feedback for a performance. Despite this fact, incidences of sex differences were apparent depending on the reason for such words of praise. For example girls were praised for things such as handwriting, neat drawings and they were used as good examples.

OVERALL OBSERVATIONS

Classroom interaction was observed. It was found to reflect a gender differentiated state of affairs. It reflected dissimilarities between boys and girls, which arise from differential treatment by teachers. The differences are large and complex. Such differences need to be studied more deeply. Based on how teachers have responded to the group and individual interview questions, and what the classroom observations revealed, the following can be highlighted:

- Teachers expected girls to behave like stereotyped women and boys to behave like men. In their response to interview questions, teachers kept on referring to the tradition.
- Sexism was found to be prevalent in aspects of classroom organization and management (physical segregation of learners in line-ups and seating arrangements, class registers etc.) of teachers and not so much in language of the classroom.
- The classroom featured a hierarchical order, where domination was clearly visible. Boys gain as a dominant force in classroom activities, because they benefit from acting as if they have the sole access to classroom resources, ranging from classroom space to laboratory equipment, not equally accessible to girls.
- Despite these features, teachers never perceived themselves behaving and or having acted upon stereotyped notions of what children might be. They said they acted on the basis of rational assessment of their learners' differences of which gender was not a significant issue. Teachers also professed to be role models for their pupils.
- In general, one is prompted to declare that discriminatory practices against girls are not easily observable in the day-to-day activities of the classroom, but it is mostly evident in the hidden curriculum. The deeply entrenched nature of gender differentiation in the consciousness of these teachers makes it difficult for them to see probable limitations they place on girls in their classes. Teachers' own beliefs also leads to a failure to recognize gender differentiation they are helping to reproduce through overt curriculum instruction in their classrooms.

- Indeed teachers were found to have reinforced the sex-role stereotypes learned at home. Half the teachers questioned admitted that they behave differently toward boys and girls, but they also pointed out that they do not do it out of intention. Differential treatment occurred through the assignment of roles, the comments about them, and the career paths they thought were appropriate for them. Although the school curriculum did not prescribe what should be done by boys or by girls, subject teachers demarcated learning objectives for girls and for boys.

The biggest question is, how we can capture these classroom gender complexities clearly and understandably, so that we can neither oversimplify, nor rigidly stick to the belief that the problem is easy to solve or is there to stay. How do we connect the life of a young learner in Grade 5 to that of an adult woman at work, facing restrictions in terms of her upward mobility? Where does the notion of a quiet girl take us in terms of why, in actual sense, the girl is quiet? Is quietness a defect that probably needs to be addressed? Further research is inevitable if answers to these questions are to be found.

In the next section I discuss gender sensitization and awareness raising in teachers regarding the problem of sexism embedded in their classroom practices and the role they can play in minimizing its prevalence.

TOWARD A SEXIST FREE CLASSROOM ENVIRONMENT

The Namibian National Gender Policy of the then Department of Women Affairs (1997:29-30), has noticed a non-disputable fact that there are indicators that the girl-child is discriminated against in all spheres of life, ranging from culture to education practice. What was noticed and confirmed in the main finding of this study becomes the catalyst for change toward a sexist-free classroom environment. According to the gender policy document, one of the key strategies to develop non-discriminatory education is to developing training programme to gender sensitize students, teachers and school managers. The document further list strategies for eliminating discrimination against girls, which includes:

- Support and encourage educational institutions and the media to adopt and project balanced and non-stereotype images of boys and girls and eliminate degrading and violent portrayal of the girl-child.
- Encourage institutions to undertake research on the girls and incorporate the findings in formulating and modifying policies, programmes to enhance the advancement of the girl-child.
- Develop and design programmes aimed at reaching grassroots to educate women, men, boys and girls on respecting one another and promote equality in relationship between girls and boys, and therefore alleviate the status of girls.
- Intergrate gender awareness training programmes in all teachers training programmes so to equip them with essential skills for all aspects of gender-sensitive teaching (DWA, 1997: 29-30).

Although it is beyond the scope of this thesis to develop a training package for the said purpose, my next section serves to suggest possible ways in which teachers can combat sexism in teaching, based on what I found as an example of discriminatory practices against girls at Akatenya Combined School. My suggestion ties in with the National Gender Policy in its strategy about awareness raising and teacher in-service training and also with the UNESCO (1998:40) gender sensitivity training manual. According to the UNESCO (1998:40) of the Gender Sensitivity Module 5, one of the main ways to close the gender gaps and flaws of today is through appropriate education and training which is focused on considerations of gender and on the upgrading of the image of women. In targeting this, training priority must be given to schools which are vital for building a new equal gender concept. In addition to these suggestions I propose that sexism can be tackled through the curriculum, professional development workshops for teachers, assertiveness training for girls as victims of gender bias; as well as working with boys to fight sexist attitudes in them.

Even though training could be the answer to bringing teachers to a realization that gender is an issue in education, it has to be established whether classroom sexism in Namibia, is indeed a result of the lack of training in the identification of gender needs of the school children. I argue hereby, that classroom sexism in Namibian teachers' teaching practices today is indeed a function of lack of training. I believe that educating teachers intensively and making them aware

of gender issues encourages them to find ways how to minimize and eventually close the gap that exists between boys and girls they teach today and who will be men and women of the future.

How can teachers be assisted to bring about change?

If we were to tackle the problem of sexism, we first need to acknowledge its prevalence in our classrooms and more fully understand its roots and motivation for its occurrence in our classrooms. According to Bourne, McCoy, and Novogrodsky, (1997:1), there are things teachers need to either realize and or acknowledge before any thing is advocated for a change, considering the many pressures society places on teachers. First and foremost, we stress the need for teachers to acknowledge that gender is a significant issue in girls' and boys' schooling. Teachers need to realize that gender intersects with many other aspects of social identity. They also need to realize that the school as an agent of socialization should take a lead in generating gender equity.

What is it that teachers need to be sensitized on? In the first instance, teachers need to have an openness of attitude and a commitment to social justice in general. A focus on gender in their instructional approach, the way they focus on any individual differences, should happen within the general context of challenging prejudice, discrimination and oppression. Teachers need to look at their own lives and be aware of their culture, its assumptions about children's gender roles in life. Through the learner-centered approaches in the classroom, teachers have to be prepared to listen and learn as well as lead children and to teach them better ways of coping with life issues and those of gender identities.

I concur with Bourne, McCoy, and Novogrodsky's (1997) line of thought that if we are to promote the achievement and a welcoming environment, especially for the female learners, we need a systemic change that allows for the girls to be part and parcel of the classroom interactions. The next section serves to offer recommendations as to what approaches to take.

Building gender awareness in teachers

One of the major findings of this study is that teachers, through the instructional process, have reinforced the sex-role stereotypes learned at home. They treated girls and boys differently through role assignment and curriculum tasks, disciplinary interactions and other classroom practices. Doing this they are not aware of the fact that some of what they say and do in their classrooms could convey messages that may have negative impact on the students they teach. One of the main ways to minimize that is through appropriate education and training, which is focused on gender considerations. Priority has to be given to teachers who are vital agents for building sexism-free teaching environments. Teachers need to be sensitized through professional development initiatives, a suggestion supported by Kennedy, Nancy Carpenter (1996). In her focused group discussion-based study with high school teachers and students, Carpenter's focused groups offered teachers and students opportunities to talk together and explore the topics of mathematics achievement, and successful mathematics teaching strategies.

Next I briefly discuss the nature of the awareness and sensitization in terms of its aims and objectives, the teachers it targets and the role they should play in minimizing the problem of sexism in classrooms.

In order to address issues of gender as highlighted in the main findings of this study, the awareness-raising I suggest has as broad aims to:

- To sensitize them on gender in general, by assisting them to develop an understanding that gender is a cultural variable that change and that they as professionals have a key role to play in influencing other members of the society to challenge the notion that gender is immutable;
- To give teachers the space to talk about their hopes, fears, their likely gains and or losses by getting involved in gender in education at large;
- To discover different perceptions of what gender means and how they can approach it their classrooms.
- To assist teachers to gain theoretical frameworks on gender;

- To train teachers within the framework of the Learner Centered Education methods could enable teachers to gain skills with regard to identification of gender needs of their learners, and ultimately to safeguard a learning atmosphere for all students.

Being aware of the ways in which schools and teachers themselves reproduce gender and discriminate against girls, teachers can take positive action to redress the situation. The point here is not really to blame the society that socialized the teachers. We only need to make it clear the teachers that people often perpetuate sexism unknowingly through daily practices.

To accomplish the objectives listed above, teachers need strategies. The strategies could be the curriculum, professional development initiatives for teachers, platforms for learners (both boys and girls) to be trained on life skills. The recommended initiatives/approaches are discussed next.

Using the curriculum

Different approaches could be used to counter sexist behaviors both in teachers and learners. The delivery of the curriculum could be one way through which teachers could be assisted to work toward a sexist free classroom environment.

The starting point towards using the curriculum for gender awareness and attitude change is by making an audit of the existing broad curriculum for gender-sensitivity. As each subject has descriptors of what all children should know, understand and be able to do at their own stages of development, it is much easier for teachers to initiate teaching methods of supporting girls if boys are acting in sexist and oppressive ways. Under the guidance of a gender-sensitive curriculum and instructional materials, teachers must operate within the ethos which openly condemns oppressive behaviours as totally unacceptable. This view confirms what UNESCO (1998) advocates as effective gender-sensitive teaching:

The teacher should use teaching methods which are sensitive to gender. Teachers should demonstrate that everyone in the classroom matters and has the ability to perform well irrespective

of their sex. The teacher should use language which does not discriminate against any of these sexes. Teachers have also to pay attention to girls and boys equally e.g by encouraging them to flexibly and friendly, allowing them room to ask questions and respond to teachers' initiated interactions, and to fully participate in classroom activities and discussions. Girls should be given the confidence they need to enable them to perform well even in those masculine labeled subjects like Mathematics and Science (UNESCO, 1998: 18).

The classroom curriculum can be used to format teachers and learners perceptions, intuitions and reasoning through themes in the various subjects. Opportunity for classroom discussions and learning are critical components in awareness raising for gender bias.

The long-term approach of using the curriculum for teachers can be effected through in-service training activities and on-going professional development sessions, where teacher educators through workshops and school-based professional development sessions assist teachers to develop and plan lessons that address gender issues.

The curriculum approach as outlined above, has put the learners in the center of the curriculum, by concentrating on the development of their self-image. A classroom organized in a learner-centered way, empowers the learner, because it facilitates a variety of experiences, and it allows for the teachers to influence the learner's attitudes.

Working with boys to minimize sexist behavior

The question is on whom should we concentrate, now that we say one of the sexes has this trait, which the other does not have. In her article, Christina Hoff Sommers (2000) pointed out that, boys behaviour should be viewed in the light of what every child can be and do. Instead of the education systems of the world wage war against boys, we should work with them to minimize sexist and oppressive behaviours in the classroom. She recommends that:

“Boys need to be educated and civilized. But school behavior problems have little to do with a hatred, patriarchy and marginalisation of women. They have

everything to do with children's abilities to bully and to be cruel. The root problem is poor discipline. Boys need a moral environment, not gender politics"

It is important that educators work on the self-image of both girls and boys. It is necessary to educate boys to learn to understand the legal implications of sexist behaviour. In order to overcome some of what boys do to girls, especially the issue of making fun and putting girls down, boys need discipline, respect guidance, love and tolerance, for them to realize that girls need to be given time and opportunity to participate fully in classroom activities and learn. Boys need to realize that the girls they meet in the classroom, working with them, playing with them and engaging in classroom activities with, are also people of the same calibre, who have the emotions, feelings, hopes, and aspirations which could enrich classroom life. Girls should not be pushed to the margins, they also need to receive the joys, satisfaction and illuminations from classroom interactions with teachers and other members of the classroom.

Educating boys to this effect entails:

- Talking with them to make them understand how girls feel if they are treated as inferiors, how they feel being powerless and for example not having access to the teacher;
- Challenging boys oppressive behavior towards girls and to get them examine their relationships with each other;
- Allowing boys and girls to sit in mixed groups so that they can develop a team relationship, which gears towards cooperation and respect for each other's opinion. It only requires increased vigilance on the part of the teacher to facilitate the learning environment.

Empowering girls to challenge domination and subordination

The image which girls acquire about themselves as a result the socialization process is a mayor impediment to the development of their full potential. Mbuye (2000:12) confirms what was pointed out in Chapter 2 that girls are conditioned from an early age to believe that a woman is inferior to a man, and that her place is in the home to carry out all the home chores in addition

to her reproductive role. Even teachers at school expected girls to behave in a submissive way, not only to the teachers themselves, but also to the boys. This study also confirmed that girls positioned themselves where their teachers wanted them to be, by behaving submissively towards boys of their class, for example when they served them with pens and pencils, sharing their lunch boxes with them etc. It is this image of a young woman that we need to work on.

We need to train girls to be assertive, the skills that is crucial to their survival, especially on issues of sexuality. Girls need to know their rights and responsibilities. They have to be able to articulate what they want and what not. This will enable them to break old patterns of behaviour, for instance it is always boys who initiate sex in a way forcing girls into the act.

Girls have to be equipped with skills to reject the woman's-place –is –in-the-kitchen route, because this image is likely to determine the future roles and aspirations of girls. Moreover it is only through education that the empowerment of girls is possible.

OVERALL CONCLUSION

The Namibian Ministry of basic Education, Sport and Culture has a policy in place, which advocates for gender sensitivity in its schools. It is unfortunate that the policy implementation has not been able to reach the classroom. This study recommends a preventative approach to classroom sexism. The approach has to be national. It must be integral to the ethos of all schools structures and processes, and it has to be evident in the attitudes, behaviours and actions of all teachers and members of school personnel. It is therefore predicted on the belief that an inviting learning environment is created when every member of staff accepts responsibility for their own attitudes and actions.

In chapter 1 I gave a rationale for studying gender issues with regard to teachers' classroom practices. In Chapter 2 I provided a theoretical framework for studying gender in the classroom with specific emphasis on Namibia. In chapter 3 I discussed methodological issues and appropriate techniques for effecting gender studies in the classroom context, and presented findings of this study in Chapter 4. Indeed teachers were found to have reinforced the sex-role

stereotypes learned at home. Half the teachers questioned admitted that they behave differently toward boys and girls, but they also pointed out that they do not do it out of intention. Differential treatment occurred through the assignment of roles to boys and girls, the comments about their innate characteristics, and the career paths they thought were appropriate for them. Although the school curriculum did not prescribe what should be done by boys or by girls, some subject teachers demarcated learning objectives for girls and for boys.

To summarise, this is an example of where teachers are part and parcel of the gender differences and biases that exist in schools today. However it would not be realistic to declare their teaching all in all sexist. This thesis has not been able to ascertain whether teachers involved in this research are sexist in behaviour. Of course teachers' treatment of boys reflected differences. However they indicated clearly that differential treatment mattered when learners' interests had to be taken into account.

To reduce if not eradicate sexism and gender bias from the classroom, there is urgent need for comprehensive interventions, which are suitable for addressing the problem in teachers and learners. Sexism is a complex problem embedded in the education systems world-wide and Namibian classrooms in particular, and especially in teachers who may inadvertently model, reinforce and maintain sexist interactions in their classrooms. The latter have to be addressed with both the perpetrators and the negatively affected. This is possible only if teachers could see it from their own perspective, remembering their own experiences of sexism from school, and becoming sensitive to their own style of interaction with children.

Clearly much more research is needed before we fully understand the gender dimension and its complexities in the Namibian context and its system of education. A further exploration into the teachers' beliefs with regard to the gender differences in deciding what to offer for girls and for boys needs to be effected as a matter of urgency, if we have to reach an understanding as to how far a teacher goes in deciding the learning objectives for the sexes. We need to fully grasp the factors and circumstances which compel teachers to treat boys and girls differently. Future research should focus on how best teachers can unlearn the socialization that led them to go unknowingly deep into the gender discriminatory trap.

While this study has stimulated my mind and heart toward gender activism, I trust that the findings and suggestion made in it will stimulate the debate on gender issues in education in general and in Namibian schools in particular. It was good that teachers have expressed their views on what they do and why in their classrooms, by acknowledging that if what they do is sexist, it did not come from their individual behaviours only, but also from a larger social system in which men and women are not equal. Moreover teachers indicated the need for “everyone of us to understand sexism [as a structural and systemic issue], while taking responsibility for our own contribution” (Individual interview with Nangula on 10 October 2000).



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APPENDIX A

GENDER ISSUES AND CLASSROOM PRACTICE IN NAMIBIA SCHOOL CLASSROOMS: A GROUP INTERVIEW GUIDE

INTRODUCTION

Hello, my name is Menette Nambala. I am an M.Ed candidate enrolled with the university of the Western Cape. I am here to talk to teachers who teach the primary phase, to observe their classes while lessons are in progress, in order to learn from them and hear their opinions about themselves and their learners. In this process I collect information which will enable me to write a minithesis about boys and girls in the classroom.

May I assure you that the information you give me through this discussion and from what I will see in your classrooms will be held anonymous and confidential. No names will be attached to the report I will produce for this study.

May I also ask your permission for me to use a tape recorder, in order to save time on taking notes of what you say and so that everybody's voice is heard. I therefore would like to take a few minutes off your time to ask you a few questions which will guide our discussion.

A.UNDERSTANDING THE CONCEPTS GENDER AND SEX

What does the two terms mean to you?

Can we define the two by way of discussing them?

B. GENDER ATTRIBUTES AND CHARACTERISTICS

The gender game

The interviewer handed out blue, pink and yellow carton paper squares to the participants. It is then agreed which color is associated with which sex or both. Based on the agreement, the interviewer reads out some words and asks the participants to raise a card with which they associate the word. The interviewer records the results. For each word or phrase called out, the participants are asked to motivate their choice.

The following words were read out: football/soccer, netball, pots and pans, baby doll, computer, mathematics, bow and arrow, gun, bicycle, teacher, nurse, doctor, amagus, (game) pounding millet, manager, class captain etc. (Adapted from Ellis and Llewellyn (1996).

C. GENDER DIFFERENCES IN BEHAVIOUR

Describe boys and girls in your classrooms. What characteristics do you give to boys and to girls?

What reputation do you give to boys and girls? Probe for obedience, patience, quietness etc.

Who normally behaves well? Who is more problematic

D. GENDER DIFFERENCES IN CLASSROOM PERFORMANCE

Would you say that boys and girls have different educational skills? If yes, what skills do boys have which others do not have?

Some people say that sometimes boys dominate girls in classroom activities, does this occur in your classes as well? How does it happen?

Do boys and girls differ in classroom participation? Who asks more questions?
Who calls on the teacher for help more frequently?

Are there learners who never say anything?

Some other people say that girls are too quiet, what do you say about this?
In which way are they quiet?

Are there girls in your classes who are really active as compared to boys?

E. GENERAL CLASSROOM PRACTICES:

Whom do you appoint to perform the following duties:
(also done according to the gender game)

Class captain, sweeping the floor, dig up the school garden, water the plants, group
activity leader, dusting the chalkboard etc. Probe for other task allocation.

We have come to the end of our discussion. I have to thank you for allowing me to
talk to you about boys and girls differences.

APPENDIX B

OBSERVING GENDER IN CLASSROOM INTERACTION TEACHERS AND THEIR LEARNERS

DATE:.....

GRADE:.....

SUBJECT:.....

TEACHER GENDER:.....

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

CLASS SIZE:.....

MAIN THEME: TEACHER BEHAVIOUR AND ACTIONS



A. VERBAL INTERACTIONS	BOYS	GIRLS	OBSERVER'S REMARKS
Language used for giving commands			
Praise			
Criticism			
Misdemeanor			
B. NON-VERBAL INTERACTIONS	BOYS	GIRLS	
Gazing at			

Frowning			
Spanking/pinching			
Other			
C. LEARNERS BEHAVIOUR	BOYS	GIRLS	
Getting the floor without permission/shouting out answers			
Leaving the room before its time			
Obedience regarding classroom rules			
Disciplinary actions			
Running classroom errands			

D. THE CLASS ROOM ORGANISATION		
Seating arrangements Entering the classroom Dress code		
E. OTHER OBSERVED ISSUES	DESCRIPTION	REMARKS



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APPENDIX C

TEACHERS WHO WERE INVOLVED IN THE RESEARCH

GROUP INTERVIEWS AND CLASSROOM OBSERVATIONS

MALES:

Katwali	English Grade 5
Paul	Mathematics Grade 5 & 7
Natango	Science grade 7-8
John	English grade 7
Mr. Science	Science Grade 6

FEMALES

Nangula	Craft and Technology Grade 5-6
Namutenya	Craft and technology Grade 7
Mweya	Mathematics grade 7-8
Ms. Betty	Social Studies grade 5-7
Diina	Science Grade 6-8

INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEWS

Mr. Science	Science lessons
Nangula	Craft making
Namutenya	Craft making
Natango	Mathematics
Mr. Fudheni	Oshindonga