

BEYOND THE RHETORIC OF GENDER EQUALITY: IS THE SCHOOL SYSTEM AN AGENT OF CHANGE?

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ABSTRACT

The Zimbabwean society is characterised by gender differentiation. Many people suggest that the school system can be used as an agent to address this phenomenon. This study therefore endeavours to explore the potential of the school system in bringing about gender equality changes in Zimbabwe. The research is based on a study of a sample of 12 secondary schools representing all categories of Zimbabwean schools. It examines the teachers' and pupils' understanding of the gender equality concept and the extent to which it is encouraged and exercised in the school system and in the home. Attention is drawn to both the formal and the hidden curriculum in the portrayal of gender equality. The study establishes that the school system is going through the masquerade of fostering gender equality as the knowledge is still hazy to the majority of pupils, especially in rural settings. Teachers are not fully conversant with the proposed methodology of gender mainstreaming and their knowledge of gender issues is too basic to warrant effective implementation. Thus, this article counters the presumption that the school system is a force for gender-related changes. Therefore, the paper argues for an alternative approach in advancing gender equality and calls for the cooperation of community and monitoring from policy makers if the school system is to honestly be an agent of change.

Keywords: gender equality, gender roles, gender mainstreaming, school system, hidden curriculum, instructional materials

BACKGROUND

Gender equality is a fairly recent phenomenon in the Zimbabwean social fabric. It began to take shape in the 1980's with the advent of independence from colonial rule. The post colonial government's policy of equal access to education provided women with opportunities to realize how they had played second fiddle to their male counterparts for a very long time. As they interacted with other women at various platforms, they acquired different gender and political perspectives and became more conscious of their unequal status to men. McFadden (2002) contends that they began to press for socio-political reforms in their favour.

Another development that provided impetus for gender parity was that Zimbabwe became signatory to many conventions and protocols on gender issues, such as the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), The Equal Remuneration Convention, The SADC Declaration on Gender, and the Beijing Declaration and Platform of Action (1995). At the UN Sponsored Millennium Summit in September 2000, 191 UN members agreed to a global contract known as the Millennium Development Goals. In the Millennium Development Goals Report (2005) by the United Nations, one of the goals stated is to promote gender equality, empower women and to eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education, preferably by 2005, and at all levels by 2015. At the

G8 meeting in France in June 2008, the world's wealthiest nations reiterated their support for the Millennium Development Goals. The scope, size, and frequency of these international gatherings signified the salience of gender issues in contemporary global discourses.

In response to the fledgling gender equality imperatives, the Zimbabwean government set up the Ministry of Women's Affairs, whose mandate was to deal with issues effecting women. Its inception was premised on the notion that women have been marginalized and deprived of their rightful human rights claim. The Ministry of Women's Affairs was later mutated into the Ministry of Youth, Gender, and Employment Creation. This was an acknowledgement of a shift from the Women in Development (WID) to Gender and Development (GAD) paradigms. In line with that, a document known as National Gender Policy was crafted by the Zimbabwean government in 2002. One of the objectives of the National Gender Policy is promotion of equal advancement of women and men in all sectors of the Zimbabwean economy. The policy acknowledges that gender equality is a key development objective on its own and the area of education poses a formidable challenge to the eradication of gender disparities. Thus, the policy sets an agenda at the national level to address gender differences obtaining in the wider society.

Mavhunga (2007) argues that:

Although government and other stakeholders' efforts through affirmative and gender sensitive policies have attempted to promote chances of access to education by girls and remove obstacles that hamper their participation, gender parity is yet to be achieved... girls continue to be marginalized.

The above resonates with Chipunza (2003)'s observation that women in Zimbabwe are being pushed into the traditional structures that are the custodians of culture.

The recurrences of gender concerns, despite decades of gender activism, illustrate that gender disparities are still embedded in the Zimbabwean social, political, and economic system. Indeed neo-colonial Zimbabwe has not fully recognized strategies that can be employed to eradicate them. The question which arises is: why is the nation not responding to the seemingly inevitable global dictates of gender equality? Given its impressive literacy level of 99%, second to Tunisia in Africa, it is a paradox that narratives of inequalities still abound in society, yet equality is an attribute of a society with a high level of literacy. It therefore suggests that a lot still needs to be done to attain a level of gender parity.

Many educationists share a conviction that the school system, through its curriculum, can provide a fix to societal problems. This is premised on the understanding that once something becomes school knowledge, its implementation is legitimized and is deemed worthwhile knowledge. However, cognizance has to be taken of the fact that the school system, per se, is not the panacea to societal problems. The solution is partly a function of the type of curriculum that the school offers, as Gordon (2000) asserts:

An important aspect of education, which channels children into gender roles, is the curriculum that they are permitted to study.

Gordon (2000) further notes that at independence, the country inherited a gender differentiated curriculum where subjects were typed as masculine and feminine. This, in a way, channels children into gender roles in the wider society. The major

question that merits the investigation is, can the Zimbabwean school system be an agent for gender related transformations?

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study adopts a feminist theoretical framework. It is couched in the discourses of gender and development, which located their roots in the universal concept of human rights. Feminism, according to Lewin, cited in Kolmar and Bartkowski (2005), is “a theory that calls for women’s attainment of social, political, and economic rights and opportunities equal to those possessed by men.”

Therefore, feminist theories are defined by women as their object of concern. The ideology of feminism basically unpacks and challenges the hegemony of patriarchy, which poses as the major impediment to the advancement of women. It is important to note that feminist theories have many variants, among them are Marxist, radical, and liberal. Each one of them provides its own toolbox of ideas in explaining the most critical issues in gender discourses. Different as they are, their point of convergence is the quest to examine and explain all structures of domination in the aspects of gender, race, class, age, sexuality, or nationality. However, it is not within the scope of this study to venture into the specifics of each of the inclinations of feminist theories. Suffice it to say that this study adopts liberal orientation. Liberal feminism emerged out of capitalism and is based on individual rights. It is important to note that, to date, gender studies have emerged as a discipline in the social science faculty of many universities.

It is also important to define the term, gender, as there is a tendency in some cases to use it synonymously with the word sex. Talbot (1998) clearly explains that gender is a social category and not a grammatical one. It identifies social differences in terms of behaviour, roles, and activities between men and women. Sex refers to the biological differences between men and women. Therefore, the two terms cannot be conflated. Khan and Sharma (1993) traced the origins of equality to ancient Greece and said that in modern times, it has emerged as a basic principle of democracy. It signifies the possession of legal, social, and political rights by every member of the body politic. History records that inequalities, in present day Africa, began during the Early Iron Age, around the second century when domestication of crops and animals led to a more settled way of life. Proctor and Phimister (1995) asserted that it was then that:

The division of labour between men and women that had begun in gatherer societies developed into a relationship of inequality in settled farming communities. The association of women with domestic work had become a firmly established tradition... Women and children grew most of the crops and cooked the food, but they did not have many rights.

Therefore, gender roles had become clearly defined in the early stages of human history. The advent of colonialism saw the further entrenchment of gender roles as men left their traditional homes to work on settler farms and mines to earn money for the paying of taxes and purchasing foreign goods. Most women were left behind to take care of children and the home. Men were preferred for their physical power in muscular jobs, such as construction of roads and railways in the early years of colonialism.

It also has to be mentioned that in the backdrop of unequal gender relations, there was a semblance of equality in the patriarchal kingdoms of the Late Iron Age states in Africa. A case in point is the Congo kingdom where Queen Nsinga

took over the control of the kingdom after her father's death and ruled from 1623-1663 (Sibanda,M.,Moyana,H. ,and Gumbo,S 1994). Her diplomatic skills, military genius, and conquests were legendary in African history. As a great military heroine, she is ranked alongside great African statesmen as Changamire Dombo, Dingiswayo, and Tshaka (Sibanda,M ,Moyana,H. and Gumbo,S 1994). It has to be qualified that such instances of equality are featured in the political sphere only. Socially gender equality was thwarted by cultural norms and values, which ensured superiority of men over women.

It may be questioned how the knowledge of gender issues infiltrated into the patriarchal regions of the developing world. Indeed the phenomenon of globalization has been held responsible for the transnational movement of this information. It, thus, becomes imperative to define the term globalization. Golden and Reinert (2006) acknowledged that it is an often discussed, but seldom defined phenomenon. Actually, it is fraught with definitional problems. They however define it as,

an increase in the impact on human activities of forces that span national boundaries. These activities can be cultural, political and technological or even biological as in the case of disease.

Therefore, globalization is a multi-faceted phenomenon. The process of globalization is central to an understanding of the contemporary world, where such aspects as gender and development, conflict, peace, and security, among others, are debated.

Gender equality stands as one of the most celebrated developments of this era and it is validated by our basic sameness as human beings. As a way of responding to the global dictates of gender equality, the Zimbabwean government adopted gender mainstreaming as a mode of provisions of the gender knowledge in various aspects of society, including the school system. Gender mainstreaming has several meanings, depending on the focus. One of the meanings proffered by the National Gender Policy (2002) of the Zimbabwean government is, integrating gender dimensions (women's and men's concerns) into development programming and planning, development models. In the area of education, gender mainstreaming entails incorporating gender issues in all curricula at all levels of education.

SOURCES AND GENERATION OF DATA

The study was carried out to establish the extent to which the Zimbabwean school system can be an agent of change from a society characterized by patriarchal relations of gender inequalities to one that imbibes the principle of equality. The school system encompasses all stakeholders, such as the school heads, teachers, pupils, the education system, the instructional materials, and the formal and hidden curricula. A total of 12 secondary schools were studied in Masvingo and Mashonaland East provinces of Zimbabwe. Six schools were studied in each province. These schools were categorized as follows: urban, rural, peri-urban, mine, and government and church-owned boarding schools. This grouping represented a wide range of schools in Zimbabwe. Two schools from each category were chosen in each of the two provinces.

240 secondary school children in the fourth form participated in the study. 20 students, randomly selected with a balanced ratio of 10 girls to 10 boys, completed questionnaires from each school. Discussions were held after the completion of questionnaires as a way of triangulation. 48 teachers participated in this study. From each school, 4 teachers were interviewed. The same teachers completed questionnaires and they were purposefully selected to represent

the following subject categories: arts, sciences, commercials, and practical subjects. 8 out of 12 school heads, whose schools formed the sample of the study, were interviewed. A document analysis of the Zimbabwean national gender policy and instructional materials was carried out. A classroom interaction analysis through lesson observations at every school under study was done. One teacher at every school was observed conducting a lesson. A total of 12 lessons were observed, 3 lessons for every subject category. Other sources of data included duty rosters in classrooms and records of allocation of areas of responsibilities at social clubs, classrooms, and school levels.

DATA ANALYSIS

Most educators argue that the school has a public function of transforming society by transmitting knowledge that the society deems worthwhile at any given time. In times of crises, more often than not, the school system has been used to sensitize children. An example is HIV and AIDS education, which has been adopted as an innovation in the Zimbabwean school system. However, one has to be cautious about the uncritical acceptance of the school system as the center for change. The underlying assumption that the school will create a milieu that enables the exercise of gender equality can be explored by an analysis of the major players in the school.

Pupils

Pupils were asked questions on what they understand by the term 'gender'. The following emerged: 192 pupils (80%) did not have a clear understanding of what it meant, but have heard it being mentioned in the electronic, print media, and sometimes at the school; 30 pupils (12.5%) indicated that it was synonymous with sex; and 18 pupils (7.5%) had a full understanding of what 'gender' means and confirmed their source of knowledge to be at workshops, held by non-governmental organizations, such as Red Cross International. It showed that the school system has done very little to alert pupils to what has become global knowledge. When further asked what 'gender equality' entails and their perceptions about it, interesting responses were given, as follows:

- *It is something to do with men and women being equal.*
- *It is a foreign concept of making women disrespectful to men.*
- *It is one of educated women's aspirations to challenge men.*
- *It applies only to the affluent societies of the developed world.*
- *It will never apply because, biologically, we are different.*
- *It should be applied at places of work and when men and women possess the same educational and professional qualifications but with limitations, especially in the home.*
- *It can be applied outside the home. Certainly a man cannot be seen doing a woman's job, such as cooking and cleaning because it is demeaning.*

The above responses show that, generally, children do not have full understanding and appreciation of 'gender equality' and the school system has not been very active in articulating its social responsibility. On whether gender equality is practiced at home, 190 pupils (79.2%) said gender equality is not practiced in their homes and it is not even talked about; and 50 pupils (20.8%) said there are instances when it is practiced, but not always. When pupils were asked to list the chores they perform at home, a similar pattern emerged: 96 girls (80%) listed chores associated with domestic work, such as cooking, cleaning, and laundry; 24 girls (20%) had lists with a mixture of gender typed roles; 94 boys (78.3%) had lists which had nothing to do with traditionally labeled women's work, but men's work; and 26 boys (21.7%) had a mixture of roles.

The above analysis shows that the kind of socialization that children are getting in most homes is still the same, that of gender differentiation and is further emphasized in the schools. Thus, if gender equality is to be exercised in an honest and credible way, there is need to synchronize what is happening at home and at school by alerting the community, especially the rural ones, to its values and rationale.

Pupils were also asked who, in their view, should teach gender equality issues and why. The following suggestions they made captured most of their sentiments:

- *Teachers should teach us because they were trained on how to impart new knowledge.*
- *The police officers are the right people to handle it because they are law enforcement agents. It should be made law so that anyone who violates it will be prosecuted. As it is, people are reluctant to change their attitudes and it can take centuries.*
- *Some specially trained people are the only ones who can teach gender issues because it is something new. It cannot be teachers because some of them are exercising gender inequality here at school.*
- *Teachers are the ones who should teach us gender equality at school because that is where we spend most of our time.*
- *Parents in the home are the best teachers of gender issues because it should start at home and be emphasized by the school system.*
- *It is a social responsibility that everyone should feel obliged to do since some homes are now child-headed because of HIV and AIDS, so such children also need to have that kind of knowledge. At school, some teachers also need to be taught gender equality.*

A mixture of feelings as regards to who is better placed to teach gender issues suggests that the school, alone, cannot appeal to all children to change attitudes of gender differentiation.

Teachers

Teachers representing various subjects were interviewed after completing questionnaires. The questionnaires and interviews focused on the teachers' understanding of gender equality and readiness to implement the innovation and the most effective way of implementation in their view. 40 teachers (83.3%) showed a good understanding of gender equality, but was not so sure about how best it can be handled in their pedagogical practice; 5 teachers (10.4%) had some idea of what it means and confirmed a lack of interest in exercising it in the school system because there are no hard and fast rules about its implementation; and 3 teachers (6.3%) were indifferent.

Teachers were also asked what they understood by gender mainstreaming and whether they have adopted it in their pedagogical practice. 41 teachers (85.4) confirmed that although the term is familiar, they were not staff developed to this form of methodology; hence they do not have comprehensive knowledge about its applicability in the school system; 4 teachers (8.3%) had a full understanding of what it meant, but they acquired knowledge from outside the school system. They lamented lack of monitoring mechanisms on the part of policy makers. As a result, more often than not the tendency is to concentrate on the main business (teaching), which is monitored. 3 teachers (6.3%) were not keen to discuss its meaning. They eschewed such discussions by emphasizing how it is impracticable at school and in the wider

society. They advanced the reason that it is at variance with cultural norms and values. However, such respondents should be aware that culture is dynamic and gender is a human rights issue. No nation can craft its own human rights, which are not universally applicable.

The teachers' responses showed that they were not fully prepared to mainstream gender equality in their pedagogical practice. This confirms what the theory of educational innovations states that teachers are not comfortable with implementing an innovation which they do not understand. Fullan (1993), among other renowned curricularists, posits that unless teachers are involved in the decision and planning of an innovation and unless they understand its rationale, its implementation is likely to be problematic. They usually revert to their established ways of going about things as change is threatening to them.

In a study exploring ECD teachers understanding and practice of democracy in South Africa, Excell and Linington (2008) advised that:

In preparing pre-service teachers for democratic practice, it is not enough simply to give them a formal understanding of 'education for democracy'. Cognitive understanding does not necessarily address affective factors, which impart internalization of the concept. The internalization of specific values it is contended is crucial if teachers are to mediate a 'lived democracy' effectively.

The foregoing advice can also be applied in the imparting of gender equality knowledge. Mere acquisition of knowledge on gender equality is unlikely to change teachers' attitudes, as regards its implementation. What is needed is to enlighten them on its moral grounding, thus, going beyond 'cognitive understanding' and addressing the affective domain.

It also has to be taken into account that teachers are products of societies that raised them. The majority of teachers are Zimbabweans who underwent professional training in Zimbabwe, which is a gendered society. Therefore, the way they handle gender issues is a function of the values that they were socialized to acquire. In this case, they are likely to perpetuate values of gender differentiation. Gordon (1995) says:

During socialization, children acquired their gender identities in a number of ways, including imitation and observation of their role models, and, at school, teachers are important role models.

Therefore, if teachers are not gender sensitive, their students are likely to imitate them. There is also need to consider Gatawa's (1980) observation that Zimbabwe has a mixed bag of teachers and the situation has remained so to date. The teachers vary enormously in terms of academic and professional qualifications. Academic qualifications range from ordinary level, advanced level, and degree level, whilst their professional qualifications include certificate in education, diploma in education, graduate certificate in education, graduate diploma in education, bachelors of education, and masters of education. Some teachers do not even have a professional qualification. Therefore, their conception, appreciation, and degree of gender sensitivity also vary.

At every school, one teacher was observed teaching. The aim was to assess the extent to which teachers were gender sensitive in their conduct, language, and handling of children. 4% of the teachers were gender neutral. There was evidence of inept handling of gender issues in 96% percent of the observed lessons. In the worst case scenario, gender

equality was trivialized to mean alternating chances of answering questions. Prefixing of questions with gender was common. The following statements were noted in several lessons:

- *This question is for girls because the previous one was answered by a boy.*
- *Girls put your hands down because you have had your chance of responding.*
- *Let's be gender sensitive and give girls a chance to respond.*

In that way, a classroom rhythm was created where boys and girls took turns to raise their hands and the children would remind each other to put their hands down and wait their turn. While it can be argued that it makes children realize the need to recognize gender equality, it was also observed that the group that had their hands down would not pay attention and, in some cases, started making noise or quietly attended to other matters, when it was not their turn to respond to questions. The teachers' conception of gender sensitivity and equality is limited to numbers, yet there is more to it than alternating chances between girls and boys.

Another aspect of gender typing of questions observed was that girls were asked simple and straight forward questions, especially the one-word type of questions. Questions addressing higher order skills of analysis, synthesis, and judgment were directed at boys in the majority of cases, thus, sending a message to the boys that they are more academically gifted than girls.

School heads

Vocational subjects in the school system are gender typed, as Gordon (2000) observed. Subjects such as metalwork and woodwork were mainly done by boys, while fashion and fabrics and food and nutrition were done by girls. School heads were asked to comment on how they allocated these subjects. 2 school heads (25%) allow children to choose because they have low enrolments and better resource endowment in comparison with other schools. 6 school heads (75%) confirmed that although they encourage them to do any subject, they allocate a whole class of either boys or girls a particular subject. Reasons for using such a method were given as follows;

- *There is a shortage of human and material resources for the particular subjects so the method ensures equitable distribution of them.*
- *Complaints from parents who do not appreciate their children's choice in gender-labeled subjects.*
- *Administratively, in schools with huge enrolments, it is easier to account for resources and manage the children.*

The corollary of the above method of allocation is that when children leave school, they continue to be channeled into gender-typed professions for which they may not be fitted, thus depriving them of an opportunity to fully exploit their potential.

Instructional materials

Teachers were asked to comment on the gender sensitivity of the textbooks they use in their subject areas. 5 teachers (10.4%) said that the way they are written is a true reflection of our society, culturally, and should remain so. 43 teachers (89.6%) commented that most of the books used are not sensitive to issues of gender, particularly the aspect of equality, in terms of the language and illustrations used. The responses of the 43 teachers (89.6%) confirm what obtains in the studies done on gender sensitivity of curriculum materials in Zimbabwe.

Snippets from a trajectory of gender equality research attests to the notion that instructional materials are replete with narratives of gender disparities. A study done by Gaidzanwa (1985) established that the content of Zimbabwean school textbooks was dominated by male characters and women would feature mainly in the domestic sphere. Such texts emphasized gender stereotypes of roles; that domestic work was for women. Chitsike (1995) observed that, the secondary school text books in Zimbabwe highlight men's achievements and ignore women. Dudu, W., Gonye, J. Mareva, Rand Sibanda, J. (2008) found out that English language textbooks used in the Zimbabwean secondary schools are written from a male perspective and trivialize women. They also observe that despite the fact that over the past years, some women have risen to prominence, content in textbooks continues to depict men in prestigious occupations. Women are portrayed as feeble, dependent, insecure, and needing men more than men need them, among a host of negative portrayals.

School heads were asked to comment on why gender insensitive textbooks continue to be the main books in the schools. Explanations offered pointed to the consensus that since the curriculum is centrally planned, syllabuses usually have prescribed textbooks and other books that the school may use are only alternatives. Also, the curriculum is examination-oriented; hence, they cannot experiment with different textbooks. If the pupils fail the national examination, the reputation of the school will be tarnished. They also pointed out that it is expensive to replace textbooks overnight, considering that most schools operate on shoe-string budgets.

The hidden curriculum?

Apart from the formal curriculum, the hidden curriculum can be considered as another way of imparting gender equality knowledge in the school system. Dewey, in Eisner (2002), underscores the efficacy of the hidden curriculum in the transmission of knowledge when he says, "perhaps the greatest of all pedagogical fallacies is the notion that a person learns only the particular thing he is studying at the time."

An analysis of the aspects in which the hidden curriculum is manifested was done in all the schools under study. Teachers were asked how they allocate duties between boys and girls at classroom level. Class teachers, both male and female, agreed that a boy class monitor and a girl one, known as monitress, wield the same amount of power. This was refuted by class pupils who alleged that in every class, a monitress is always deputy to a monitor and teachers allocate more duties to a monitor than a monitress. In a covert way, class teachers emphasize male domination at classroom level. An analysis of records of leaders of social clubs in the schools revealed that most of the leaders were boys and very few were girls. The same trend was observed in leadership of games houses, where the house captains were boys and girls were the deputies. The impression being given is that boys are more capable in leadership roles than girls. This is an indicator that gender inequality is being perpetuated through the hidden curriculum.

COMMENTS, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The foregoing analysis shows that the education policy planners are aware of the gender inequalities in the education system. This is evidenced by the crafting of the gender policy, which has advanced mainstreaming as a strategy to address the issue in the education system. The above has also shown that not much is being done to implement, monitor, and evaluate the gender equality strategies in the schools. This confirms Chipunza's (2003) observation that, "Although developing countries refer to equality and egalitarianism in their policy documents, they have done very little to fulfill these noble goals." Chipunza (2003) further expresses the view that despite impressive policy frameworks, gender issues remain unresolved and developing countries still have a long way towards attaining gender parity.

Perhaps one of the reasons that have contributed to gender equality not being effectively implemented in the schools is its mode of provision. Gender mainstreaming has not produced the desired results and the question which arises is, what is the best way of teaching gender equality to children in the schools? A related question would be, how far teachers should go when dealing with gender issues? If gender equality is integrated in certain subjects, it entails posing new questions in that particular discipline. Peters (1966) argues that a form of knowledge has structure, procedures, concepts, and discipline. It may be questioned whether it will not cause problems to fuse gender equality knowledge with a totally different discipline. At university level, courses on gender issues are offered in the social science faculty. At school level, astute critics of the school system can question the credibility of such an innovation on an already overloaded curriculum if it were to become a stand alone subject. Other dissenting voices would question whether issues of gender inequalities have reached crisis levels and drawn attention of curriculum planners to the extent of claiming a slot on the school timetable as what was done to HIV/AIDS education. Rhetorically, Longwe (2000) responds by making reference to the Zambian experience in that.

Any attempt to divert the school from its present role (of intergenerational reproduction of patriarchy) will automatically attract a firm and immediate opposition from patriarchal establishments.

However if gender equality is incorporated in the school curriculum as a stand alone subject, it becomes authenticated as worthwhile knowledge. In that way, it is not likely to face `tissue rejection` as an innovation.

In the Zimbabwean context, the notion that the school system can create a milieu that enables the exercise of gender equality has to be taken with caution. The school operates within the context of a given society and the Zimbabwean society is, to a large extent, still patriarchal. Teachers as the executors of the curriculum and children as recipients of that curriculum on gender equality are part of that society and its characteristics are bound to influence the way they view gender issues. It is worth sharing Longwe's (2000) view that, "schools are patriarchal establishments which are grounded in the values and rules of society." It stands to reason that if an egalitarian society is to be established, focus should not be on the school system, alone. All other institutions related to the school system should embrace the spirit of gender equality.

The school system in Zimbabwe, as this study has revealed, has unconsciously become a legitimate purveyor of gender inequalities. The gender mainstreaming methodology has not been effective enough to amount to a noticeable qualitative change. However, the methodology should not be seen as a failure only, but also an essential indicator for the need for an

alternative strategy. There is need, on the part of policymakers, to go beyond the rhetoric of gender equality by constantly monitoring the implementation of policy and evaluating it. Mechanisms have to be put in place to staff develop teachers so that they are comfortable with the implementation of gender equality knowledge in the schools.

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