

Influence of Teacher Pedagogical Practices on Gender in Nairobi Informal Settlements and Kilifi County Schools, Kenya

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Abstract

This paper examines teachers' pedagogical practices in the classroom and their implications on girls' learning outcomes. The paper is based on a qualitative case study of selected schools in Nairobi and Kilifi counties in Kenya. A total of six primary schools; four in Nairobi informal settlements and two from Kilifi (representing the arid and semi-arid lands) participated in the study. A total of 220 informants including 189 children and 31 adults were interviewed individually or in groups. The study utilised observations, interviews, Focus Group Discussions (FGDs), and mapping methods to generate data. Results indicated that teachers engaged boys more than girls in the learning processes, grouping learners according to their abilities that saw girls fall into poor performing categories. The study concluded that gender-biased pedagogical practices marginalised girls further hence limiting their chances of acquiring quality education and equity for sustainable development. The paper recommends retooling teachers on gender responsive pedagogy.

Keywords: Pedagogical practices, Marginalisation, Gender, Learning outcomes

1.1 Introduction

Over the years, a wide gap has existed between male and female in education. However, deliberate measures have been made to address this gender inequality. Notably, these efforts include Education for All, Millennium Development Goals (UN, 2000; UNESCO, 2004; UNDP, 2001; UN, 2006) and currently Sustainable Development Goals (2016). Specifically, Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4, provides for inclusive and equitable quality education for all which is a reflection of the need to address gender inequality in education. It is noteworthy that a lot has been done to reduce gender gaps and improve the status of women and girls over the past three decades. However, significant gender gaps still exist in all sectors globally even though they are mainly greater among the poor households.

Thus, specifically, this paper is based on one of the qualitative studies focusing on girls' education and empowerment conducted in July 2014. The research cross-examined the multifaceted barriers to girls' education, in the voices of the key actors that included: the girls, boys, parents and teachers themselves, and documented factors contributing to their empowerment or marginalisation.

2. Literature Underpinning

From 1990 and specifically since 2000, the allegiance to Education for All (EFA) by the 2015 goal witnessed significant commitments by many countries in sub-Saharan Africa to increase enrollment in basic education. In the year 2003, the Kenya Government introduced Free Primary Education (FPE), for the fourth time in the history of the country¹ which led to unprecedented increase in the number of children accessing basic education. Currently, national enrollment in primary education in Kenya stands at 51% boys and 49% girls, an indication of gender parity in access to primary education. Nevertheless, these national statistics tend to mask regional disparities and especially among the marginalised and hard to reach communities that still lag behind in the national averages in terms of access and expected learning outcomes (Uwezo, 2010; 2011). In particular, gender discrepancies still persist in certain regions more so in the Arid and Semi-Arid Areas, and urban informal settlements tilting negatively against the female gender (National Education Sector Plan, 2014). Notably, even though FPE in Kenya has improved enrollment that has narrowed the gender disparity, Livingstone (2008) points out that increases in numbers alone is not satisfactory: "in order to truly see girls thrive at school, benefit from their education, and enjoy elevated social status, gender equality must be more than quantitative" (p. 54).

Consequently, the emphasis has now shifted to provision of quality education as articulated in Goal 6 of *Dakar Framework for Action (2000)* which advocates for "Improving every aspect of the quality of education, and ensuring their excellence so that recognised and measurable learning outcomes are achieved by all, especially in literacy, numeracy and essential life skills". In Kenya, this goal is catered for in the Sessional Paper No. 1 of 2005² which calls for the development of a system to monitor learner achievement. Currently, quality

¹Presidential decrees in 1971, 1974 and 1979 eliminated school fees in all the remote districts; ensured free education for all children in grades one through four and established a standard annual fee for students in grades five through seven; and finally abolished primary school fees outright respectively.

²The National Education Sector Plan, 2013-2018 indicates that the gender parity index increased from 0.95 in 2005 to 0.97 in 2010 but notes that one of the key constraints in the basic education sector is the lack of or limited gender responsive pedagogical skills for practicing

education continues to receive prominence in the education sector. The National Education Sector Plan (NESP) of 2013-2018 stipulates that during the plan period one of the sixteen objectives will be to “Improve the quality of all aspects of education and training so that recognised and measurable learning outcomes are achieved, especially in literacy, numeracy and essential life-skills relevant to the world of work and social competencies and values”. The NESP investment programmes include “improving access, equity, quality and teaching and learning process at all education levels while actualising the right to free and compulsory basic education”. Moreover, the constitution of Kenya (2010) recognises the right to free, compulsory and quality education for every child.

The commitment by the Kenyan government to provide quality formal education is evidenced by the heavy investments into education and mechanisms to address gender equality. Through Sessional Paper No.1 of 2005, the government is committed to ensure a gender responsive and child centred school environment including application of measures to improve performance in Mathematics Science and Technical (SMT) subjects. In addition, the government’s Gender Policy in education (RoK, 2007) provides a framework for organisation of gender responsive education at all levels while Kenya Vision 2030 (RoK, 2007) recognises the critical role of youth and other vulnerable groups irrespective of gender in social, economic and political development. In addition, the 2010 constitution of Kenya stipulates that, “every child has the right to be protected from abuse, neglect, harmful cultural practices, all forms of violence, inhuman treatment and punishment and hazardous or exploitive labour” (Article 53.1.d). Despite these efforts, available research evidence point to the persistent critical issues relating to retention, transition, performance, attainment and quality that impact negatively on the education of girls, more than that of boys, particularly in marginalised regions (WERK, 2017).

Gender-biased pedagogical practices have been identified as one of the main factors that affect girls’ empowerment and the attainment of gender equality. It is also widely acknowledged that teachers can make or break a student’s ability to enjoy school and achieve academic success. A large body of research evidence reveals that teachers can motivate their students to perform well in the classroom if they take time to build relationships and interact with the students (Diedrich, 2010). Hence, what happens in the teaching and learning processes in the classroom plays a critical role in determining how well girls and boys participate in education and whether they stay in school and do well in their studies (FAWE, 2012). Since teachers are key to the teaching and learning processes, their understanding and awareness of gender responsiveness is crucial to the effective participation of both girls and boys. Regrettably, there is a dearth of evidence describing the teaching-learning processes in Kenyan classrooms from a gender perspective. At the heart of this paper is the fundamental belief that gender responsive teachers make a difference in the teaching and learning process.

This paper is based on the qualitative research from *Wasichana Wote Wasome* (Let all Girls Learn) project (2013-2017). *Wasichana Wote Wasome (WWW)* was a *Girl Education Challenge (GEC)* project funded by *DFID* under *Stop Change Window*. The Pricewaterhouse Coopers (PwC) and Coffey were the fund and evaluation managers respectively. The aim of WWW project was to increase school enrollment, attendance rates and learning outcomes for 124,000 marginalised girls in Kenya in two contexts: Arid and Semi-Arid Lands (ASALs) and urban slums. The 4 year project was implemented in 500 schools (250 in the ASALs and 250 in the urban informal settlements) by a consortium of partners that included: Education Development Trust (formally CfBT Education Trust), Concern worldwide, Ananda Marga Universal Relief Team (AMURT), Girl Child Networks (GCN) and Women Educational Researchers of Kenya (WERK) that was in charge of monitoring and evaluation. To attain these outcomes the project was expected to drive lasting behaviour change in four dimensions (the community, the home, the school and the girl herself) that support girls’ opportunity to learn, including improved quality of teaching and learning, and positive community attitudes to girls’ education, as articulated in its theory of change.

3. Methodology

The study employed an ethnographic approach that usually involves interaction with informants in their natural, real-world where the action is taking place. This approach allows the researcher to take note of the informants’ feelings, attitudes and emotions, hence telling the story from the informants’ perspectives (Iphofen & Robinson, 2011). In accomplishing the study, the researchers and research assistants immersed themselves into the schools for one week. It was an in-depth interaction that went beyond the “what” to the “how” and the “why” with the informants.

The study was conducted in Nairobi and Kilifi that represented urban informal settlements and ASAL counties respectively. The Nairobi informal settlements are characterised by insecurity and lack of social amenities such as unclean drinking water, poor health services, and poor housing (UNICEF, 2006). Majority of the schools in Nairobi informal settlements are low cost private schools whose infrastructure is pathetic and teachers are mostly untrained or unqualified. Equally, learning resource materials are limited or lacking

teachers.

altogether. On the other hand, most of the primary schools in Kilifi are public establishments. Kilifi County is along Kenya's coastal region that is endowed with many tourism attraction sites that are popular with international and local tourists. In spite of its rich tourism, Kilifi is one of the poorest counties in Kenya and is among the five counties in the country with the greatest income inequalities (Kenya National Bureau of Statistics and Society for International Development, 2013). In addition, the county has high illiteracy rates; 36% of its population are illiterate while only 13% has been through secondary education. It ranks among the poorest performing counties in Kenya Certificate of Primary Education (KCPE) results (KNEC, 2013). Gender disparity in education is widespread as it stands at 41% girls and 59% boys (Mwangi, 2014). It is against this backdrop that four schools in Nairobi and two in Kilifi were selected for the case study to explore girls' experiences at school that were empowering or an obstacle in their pursuit of education.

The four schools in Nairobi were situated in the low income urban slums of Nairobi County. Nairobi I is located in informal settlements of Kangemi in Westlands Constituency while Nairobi II is in Kawangware, Dagoretti Constituency whereas Nairobi III and Nairobi IV schools are in Mlango Kubwa, Mathare Constituency and Korogocho slums in Kasarani Constituency respectively. On the other hand, the two schools from Kilifi discussed here as Kilifi I and II are from Bahari Constituency. Most of the children in the two locations came from poor households that survive on less than a dollar per day. Parental or guardians main source of livelihood was casual labour.

Overall, 220 informants (73 male and 147 female) were identified through purposive sampling and snowballing. Girl leaders and girls who had dropped out were the key informants of the study. Other girls and boys from upper classes, head teachers, teachers and parents, (some representatives from Board of Management) were purposively selected to provide supplementary information.

It should be noted that the actual number of children who formed the sample for the study was much more than recorded only that the absolute number of girls and boys who participated in the Whole Class Activities was not recorded which is one of the limitations of the study.

Data collection was done by means of observation, interviews, Focus Group Discussions (FGDs), and mapping methods. In addition, the author employed note taking and use of audio recorders and cameras during data collection. Data transcription and analysis was continuous as it went hand in hand with data collection processes. Data analysis was conducted manually which entailed identification of themes, patterns and description of situations. The data collection process was guided by WERK's Child Protection Policy and Research Ethics Policy.

4. Results and Discussions

4.1 Gender stereotypes in and out of school

Gender stereotypes are social constructs which are subjective perceptions or prejudice of one gender over another. This study established widespread gender stereotyping in both Nairobi and Kilifi schools. The stereotypes were similarly held by teachers, learners and parents reflecting the larger stereotyping in our society.

4.1.1 Gender stereotypes in the construction of school leaders

Remarkably, in the school set up gender stereotyping played a major role in as far as selection of the school leaders was concerned. Evidence from the two counties indicated that boys were portrayed as better leaders, brighter academically, stronger, brave, hardworking and unlikely to drop out of school. On the converse, girls were regarded shy, reserved, timid, lacking in authority, incompetent, passive and above all most likely to drop out of school. In Nairobi, two teachers gave their reasons for voting a boy into leadership:

...a boy...is hardworking, confident and can talk in front of people. Sometimes when choosing leaders we look for pupils who are bright. Girls are not bright (Female teacher interview, Nairobi, July 2014).

... a boy is readily available, and can command others effectively; and a boy is likely not to drop out of school (Male teacher interview, interview, Nairobi, July 2014).

The nuance from the teachers quoted above is a clear indication that the two teachers held strong beliefs that boys were better than girls which exacerbates girls' opportunity to explore their full potential. The situation in Kilifi was no different. The school leadership hierarchy revealed that girls were deputising boys or were secretaries to the various school clubs. For instance, in one of the schools in Kilifi, whereas, the secretary of the Rights of Children's (ROC) club was a girl, the chair was a boy. Furthermore, in another club it was noted that an apparently confident girl was relegated to the position of an assistant chairperson, while the chair was still a boy. A female teacher, who was categorical that she would choose a boy for a school president, claimed that:

...nowadays prefects are selected through voting. During the voting process girls will shy off from campaigning or even voting. I see them behave the way their mothers behave during the general elections (national election) voting period. They have no voice of their own". (Female Teacher 2, 15th July 2014).

The quotation above depicts a female teacher's strong opinion about girls being shy, there to be seen and not to

be heard, they are not aggressive like the boys and hence are incapable of campaigning for leadership positions. This is a quite unfortunate assertion because research evidence indicate that teachers' beliefs can influence students own beliefs thereby making them accept what the teachers say since teachers have significant power over students.

Besides, the language used by teachers in the classroom also revealed gender stereotyping. Some teachers used 'him' oblivious of 'her', to refer to both genders. An attention – grabbing incidence is documented in one class five, English lesson in Kilifi. In this class, a teacher explained active and passive voices as thus: 'Joseph taught me', 'The books were taken by him', 'Clara folded clothes.' Interestingly, while the two men in these examples are being associated with books and teaching, the lone female mentioned is said to be folding clothes, a socially ascribed role to girls and women in most communities in Kenya. Thus, what was displayed in the classrooms seemed to match the stereotype observed in the construction of leadership and gender roles discussed earlier.

Boys and girls also had their stereotypes against the genders. Some girl leaders in Nairobi expressed the view that "boys make better leaders since they are strong and brave". Similarly, a boy in Kilifi argued that "...I would opt for the boy leader because boys are strong and people obey what they say. Girls are usually coy and afraid". Additionally, a boy leader (head boy) from one of the Nairobi schools opined that he cannot elect a girl leader because 'a girl has never been his leader'. This response by the Head boy reflects the dominant patriarchal attitudes towards women in leadership in the Kenyan society. Likewise, a girl leader in Nairobi expressed a strong opinion, citing Kenya's president:

No. A girl can't win against a boy...the thing a boy does a girl can't do... let me give the example of Uhuru Kenyatta¹. He is a president and he's a man. Today he may be called in Japan and he will go, tomorrow he will be needed in Germany and he will go. The other day he will be invited in Tanzania and he still goes. Isn't it? It is not possible for a woman to travel that way without getting tired (Girl leader interview, Nairobi, July 2014).

Corroborating the above view, a female parent in Nairobi opined that boys are goal driven, resilient and persistent:

If a boy decided to sit in class, follow advice and learn and a girl also decided to do the same there will be a difference [in the outcomes]. You know the boy will say, I want to work hard and achieve and they will put in a lot of efforts. Girls may not put in as much efforts as the boys so there will be differences. The boy will eventually perform much better than the girl (Female Parent, Nairobi, July 2014).

Another fascinating finding is that it was not only girls who portrayed low self- image; but also female teachers as they perceived their male peers to be better than them as evidenced by this conversation centred around work performance in the school:

Female teacher: Male teachers are very hard working compared to female teachers. They all come early and teach pupils in upper classes by 6:00 am and they are sometimes left teaching in the evening and the like.

Author: Why do you think female teachers aren't as hard working or don't report to school as early as their male counterparts?

Female teacher: Women have a lot of work at home unlike the men who don't have a lot of work in the home. Besides female teachers are not teaching upper classes. So the female teachers come around 7 a.m. because children in lower classes come to school from 7:30-8:00 a.m.

In the opinion of the informant quoted above female teachers are not hard working simply because they do not come to school early; not because of their own volition but because they have chores to accomplish at home before going to work unlike the male teachers. It is critical to note male teachers who are perceived to be hard working are reporting to school early because they teach in upper classes while female teachers do not. It was later learnt that all female teachers in (Nairobi II) were teaching in lower primary school because they were not qualified to teach in upper primary; they were holders of Early Childhood Development Education (ECDE) certificate and not P1 holders or primary teacher education (PTE) course that is the minimum qualification for one to teach in upper primary. This draws attention to the issue of home-work balance which is of greater significance to women than men in the way it affects their professional development. It also draws attention to the gender socialisation of women themselves who have internalised the male dominant view of women being not committed professionally speaking.

The general finding on gender stereotypes corroborates (Fiske, 1993; Stangor & Lange, 1994). Most of these stereotypes often described men as intellectual, competent, strong and brave, while women are seen as homely, warm and expressiveness, incompetent and passive. They portray the male as the strong, dominant

¹Uhuru Kenyatta is the current President of Kenya

person with leadership traits, one who works and should be outside the home in often-prestigious occupations; while female is usually portrayed as being subordinate and confined to the home.

4.1.2 Gender Bias in and out of school

Gender bias is a preference or prejudice toward one gender over the other. Findings from the schools in both Kilifi and Nairobi counties showed that gender bias was rampant in the classrooms. Generally, there were similarities in the way teachers both male and female interacted with pupils in favour of boys. Teachers targeted boys who readily participated in the learning processes at the expense of girls who were largely passive as was revealed in a classroom observation:

...‘Many times, in response to questions, boys aggressively raised their hands while shouting ‘teacher me’, teacher me’, thereby catching attention from the teachers which increased their chances of participation in the lesson (Classroom observation, Nairobi I, 2014).

In addition, it was observed that boys had self-confidence that enabled them to seize the slightest opportunity in the classroom to participate. The observer had this to say about a number of boys who were called in the front of the classroom to demonstrate how a white man talks. She explained:

...the boys role played it with a lot of zeal and humour! They even sealed their noses as they spoke to bring out the white man’s accent and changed their walking styles to imitate him. All the three girls who were given a chance to simulate the same activity were too shy to even try. They looked down and smiled sheepishly’ (Classroom observation, Kilifi I, 2014).

Confidence exhibited by the boys in the above excerpt can be attributed to the attention and involvement accorded to boys by the teachers who consciously or unconsciously seemed oblivious of girls learning needs in the classroom set up.

This tendency by teachers to engage boys more than girls in the learning process supports evidence from *Wasichana Wote Wasome* baseline survey (WERK, 2014) that indicated that teacher pupil classroom interaction in Class 2 and 5 was in favour of boys. Generally, the gender of the teacher was found to influence classroom interactions for Grade 2 and Grade 5 in both ASALs and Urban Slums. Findings for Grade 2 indicated that in ASALs boys had more interactions with teachers regardless of the gender while girls in urban slums had better teacher interactions.¹ Overall, girls in grade 2 had more pupil-teacher interactions (53.3%) compared to boys (46.7%). This was different for grade 5 with boys having more interactions (51.2%) compared to girls’. The study did not however investigate the quality of the pupil teacher interaction.

Further, a common narrative from teachers who were interviewed in the two locales (Nairobi and Kilifi) about gender equity in classrooms was that they treat all their pupils equally irrespective of gender. This result is in line with Sadker and Sadker’s studies in which teachers believe they treat students equally and deny gender bias in their own behaviour (Sadker & Sadker, 1995). This clearly demonstrates gender blindness on the part of the teachers because boys and girls have different needs and hence should not be treated the same. On the other hand, this was not the case in practice as witnessed through pupil teacher interactions in the learning teaching processes. For instance, in a Class five mathematics lesson in Kilifi II, researchers put the participation of girls and boys at 30 and 70 per cent respectively. In the same classroom, numerous cases were recorded of the male mathematics teacher calling boys by their full names while only referring to the girls as ‘you girl’ when asking them to participate in the lesson. Additionally, the teacher was keen to employ reinforcement to motivate boys by asking the pupils to clap for the boys who gave correct answers but seemed to forget doing the same for the few girls who participated in the lesson.

The finding on teacher pupil interaction corroborates with Jones and Dindia’s (2004) finding in their meta-analysis study which examined patterns of sex differences in teacher-initiated teacher–student interactions and found that teachers initiate more overall interactions and more negative interactions, but not more positive interactions, with male students than with female students. The discourse above on teacher pupil interactions point at the teaching-learning processes that are disempowering to girls and thus, if the teachers are not sensitive to the needs of the girls, the girls may not learn at their expected level. If girls are left behind academically, the achievement of sustainable development remains a mirage.

Moreover, recent research evidence shows that girls are discriminated against by teachers who at times knowingly or unknowingly intimidate them when they uphold prevailing socio-cultural norms of gender inequality and place a greater value on boys’ education (Cortis, Baldachino, Borg & Gauci, 2014). In addition, according to the American Association of University Women (AAUW, 2006) differential treatment accorded to boys and girls by teachers and the society negatively affected the educational progress, self-esteem, and career

¹In ASALs: female teachers to boys interaction - 51% and male teachers to boys interactions – 54% and in urban slums: female teachers to girls’ interaction - 55% and male teachers to girls’ interactions – 53%). For Grade 5, male and female teachers in urban slums interacted more with girls (53% and 51% respectively). However, in ASALs, there were more male teacher–boy interactions (58%) compared to girls’ a 42%. Female teachers’ interactions with boys and girls in ASALs were equal.

choices of girls. This study found that in Nairobi II school, boys' academic performance tended to be better than that of girls as evidenced by a quick perusal of the mark sheet that showed boys taking positions one to four with girls relegated to the last ten positions. Possibly this finding can partly be attributed to teachers differentiated treatment of girls in favour of boys.

Outside the school, it was revealed that gender bias is replicated at the household level. Faced with the challenge of scarcity of resources, if a choice has to be made between sending a boy or a girl to school, the boy would usually be given the priority. This was echoed by many parents in ASAL region. Parents from the urban slums however indicated that they would support one child at a time and give preference to a child who was performing better regardless of gender.

There was also a notable trend in some schools to group pupils according to their ability. This meant that academically weak pupils were grouped together. This observation was confirmed in a follow-up interview, with a female teacher who explained that pupils sitting arrangement was based on pupils' perceived academic ability, with the 'poor performers', relegated to the far end of the classroom. In one Class 5 that was observed, (Kilifi II) the author noted that majority of the girls at the back were overage girls who were largely ignored in the learning process, "pupils at the back seem not to know what exactly is happening, none of them answered or asked a question in class, the teacher takes a cane and walks around the class, the pupils pretend to be busy and the teacher also keeps avoiding the group (Classroom Observation, Kilifi July 2014). Sociological literature suggests that categorising pupils into ability groups can impact those labelled as "slow learners" or "poor performers" negatively as it promotes stigma thereby destroying their motivation to learn (Snider & Schumitsch, 2006).

4.1.3 Psychological abuse

Munro (2001) describes psychological or emotional abuse as a series of repeated incidents deliberate or not, that insults, criticises, intimidates, threatens, isolates, degrades or humiliates another person. A repulsive incident was highlighted where Class 2 boys were recorded shouting 'hajui huyo' 'hajui huyo' ('that one does not know, that one does not know') in an apparent referral to a girl who had raised her hand to participate in a mathematics lesson. Conspicuously, the female teacher did nothing to protect the girl in question. In addition, one of the boys reportedly taunted the girl 'yuanuka huyo' (that one stinks) but still the teacher did not take action to stop this inappropriate behaviour. Notably, this treatment of the girl by the boys and indifference displayed by the teacher is disempowering to the girl given that literature demonstrates that caring teachers are essential for the retention and positive academic performance of the students, especially for a vulnerable population or marginalised groups (Valenzuela, 1999). Likewise, some empirical evidence suggests that girls need female leader figure to be empowered and to cope with puberty stage, and boys need male leader figures who exemplify caring leadership, a role modelled by teachers in a school set up (Colclough, Rose & Tembon, 2000; Rose & Al-Samarrai, 2001; UNIFEM/UNDP, 2002).

Another case of psychological or emotional abuse was noted in a class 2 (Nairobi I) where a male teacher was too indifferent to the predicament of a crying girl in an English lesson. Other children tried to draw the attention of the teacher but he was unmoved! Additionally, the same teacher was observed condescendingly dismissing and humiliating a girl who had requested to be given more time to copy an assignment from the chalkboard before it could be erased. Reportedly, the teacher instead ordered for the assignment to be erased, leaving the humiliated girl to break down in embarrassment (Nairobi I, classroom observation, July 2014). The implication here is that girls will be marginalised further when teachers fail to address their personal challenges. In the mixed FGDs, girls and boys described a favourite teacher as one who was always willing to help them find solutions to their personal challenges.

4.2 Teachers' classroom pedagogical practices

Pedagogy is the "how" teaching and learning takes place. As a result, there are several approaches that can be used effectively in content delivery because no single approach is sufficient. Consequently, effective teachers use a variety of strategies in the teaching and learning as may be appropriate depending on content, needs of the learner and by providing a supportive learning environment. Child centred methodologies are most effective as advocated in constructivist learning theory that postulates that learning occurs when learners are actively involved in the process of learning and knowledge production as opposed to impassive reception of information. This paper reveals that even though most of the teachers engaged in the Let All Girls Learn project, were trained, experienced, and some had received teacher coaching from Education Development Trust (formally, CfBT Education Trust), most of the teachers seemed to have poor class control and pedagogical skills. Teachers observed teaching Mathematics and English lessons in classes 2 and 5 used a combination of methods such as lecture, demonstration; and question and answer to deliver their lessons. However, observations in classroom in both Nairobi schools and Kilifi indicated teachers' delivery of the lesson too mechanical or routine to promote meaningful learning. Teachers' interaction with pupils was only limited to question and answer and when the pupils failed to get the right answers, there was no meaningful follow up from the side of the teachers. Very little attempt was made to help boys and girls learn hence learners may not develop to their full potential.

Furthermore, pupils expressed mixed feelings about their teachers. For instance, they cherished teachers who, in their perception, were informed, clarified, encouraged, worked hard, and attended to their lessons regularly. They also spoke well of teachers who were humorous, related well to the learners, and went out of their way to safeguard them from bullies or assisted them in personal matters such as buying them sanitary pads (for girls) or medicines when need arises. On the other hand, pupils described majority of their teachers to be harsh and intolerant; often caning them for what they considered to be minor infringements. They took an issue with frequent teacher absenteeism; impatience and their reluctant to explain, and lack of compassion towards the problems of learners. There was rampant use of the cane or corporal punishment in all the schools visited.

4.3 Non-existent or gender insensitive teaching & learning materials

It is well acknowledged that teaching & learning materials (TLMs) provide critical opportunities for pupils to explore ideas and knowledge, solve problems and advance knowledge and skills. In an ideal situation, teachers use a variety of interesting and exciting materials to teach the concepts outlined in the curriculum to ensure that pupils are actively involved in their learning. However, in most of the classes that were observed, there were no signs of TLMs; and where they existed there was no attempt by the teachers to use them in the lesson delivery. In one school in Kilifi, an old ragged map of Kenya was the only teaching aid displayed on the classroom wall. The few classrooms in the school that exhibited wall charts sent gender stereotypical messages. This was evident in Class 2 that had wall hangings that depicted women cooking and winnowing while men were depicted as teachers, doctors and farmers. In other cases, charts and learning materials depicted gender neutral messages. For example, in a Class 5, “there were two charts with one that presented the human digestive system while the other one showed the classification of plants” (Classroom observation, July 2014).

School libraries are necessary to develop engaged readers who have the competence and predisposition to read and learn past their years at school. As a result, available research evidence indicates that access to libraries promote and improve students reading skills and learning achievement (KwaZulu-Natal. Department of Education and Culture, 2003; Krashen, 2004). However, the research findings reported in this paper indicated that a well-established library in one of the schools was not promoting and developing a reading culture among the pupils because it was inaccessible. Throughout the week that the study was conducted in this school, not a single boy or girl went in the library to study or even borrow a book. Accordingly, this meant that the learning materials in the library were not utilised effectively to support learners to construct knowledge and enhance future learning strategies, essential for laying a sound foundation for lifelong learning. Below is a shelf in one of the school’s library that remained unutilised.

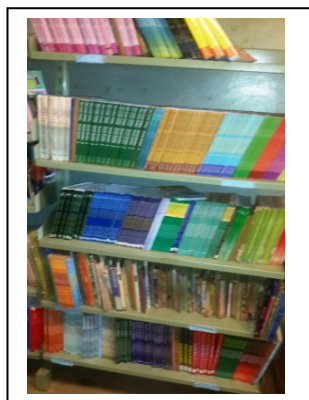


Figure 1: Unutilised books Stacked in the school library

In the classroom situation, there was insufficient number of textbooks for pupils in the classes that were observed. In one of the schools in Kilifi, it was noted that a text book in key subjects such as Mathematics and English was being shared by four and sometimes five pupils. Most of the time pupils were observed making a lot of noise as they moved around the classroom to find a book to share; hence a lot of time was wasted. There were instances where boys and girls were unable to join a group with a textbook as was observed in a Class 5 English lesson “in the middle of the first row, a group of five female pupils did not have a textbook and were just in their own world” (Classroom observation, July 2014) as they could not follow up what was being taught in class.

Like the textbooks, learners lacked even local learning materials or resources. In a Class 2 mathematics lesson, it was observed that the male teacher “has a set of counting sticks, the pupils had their sticks too; however, a few didn’t have the counting sticks. The teacher however, didn’t ask them why they do not have counters. Some learners were observed doing their own things and the teacher did nothing about it”. Other teaching aids had the ability to instil fear in the learners as was the case of this class five mathematics lesson in which the teacher held a stick throughout the lesson which was used both as a teaching tool as well as a tool for administering corporal punishment.

5. Implication to Research and Practice

Despite having a variety of pedagogical approaches available in schools, not all strategies are appropriate or effective for all groups of pupils. This paper is an insight to teachers and all stakeholders to carefully plan and implement appropriate pedagogy for the different pupil categories. The educational teaching and learning process has the potential capability to accentuate the gap in capabilities between girls and boys. It is therefore crucial that with this in mind, pupils are made to experience the educational equality and quality at all levels notwithstanding their gender.

6. Conclusion

From the preceding discussion it can be concluded that schools were perpetuating gender bias and gender stereotypes as evidenced by majority of the teachers, pupils and parents who held gender-stereotypes. Although the teachers in the public schools were qualified, and some had received teacher coaching from CfBT Education Trust, most of the teachers seemingly had poor pedagogical skills. Further Inadequate teaching learning-materials impacted negatively on the teaching and learning processes. Girls, especially those from poor families, face multiple challenges in accessing the education they need to succeed in life. These challenges reinforce existing inequalities making it quite difficult for disadvantaged girls to learn. Consequently, challenging gender stereotypes is expected to have generally favourable effects in terms of cultivating equal treatment for both boys and girls for effective learning.

7. Recommendations

1. The findings from this study have great implications for classroom practice. Consequently, it is recommended that teacher education curricula for both pre-service and in-service must include gender responsive pedagogy so as to address the gender inequality in the social systems.
2. Teachers must learn to recognise and eliminate gender bias in their interactions with pupils both within and outside the classroom.
3. Practicing teachers should avoid language that restrictions boys and girls from participating in the teaching learning processes

8. Further Research

While this study has presented the deficiencies in the teaching and learning process as pertains to teacher pedagogical practices, the study does not guide the teacher on what should be done instead to fill these gaps. Therefore, a study could be carried out to identify some of the cognitive and motivational styles to enhance academic performance among girls in schools.

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