

Book Review:

Gender Responsive Pedagogy: A Teacher's Handbook (Mlama P., Dioum M., Makoye H., Murage L., Wagah M., and Washia R., 2005, Nairobi 00505, Kenya:42 pages)

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Abstract

This teacher's hand book has twelve units. Gender is stated firstly, and followed by the issues of background to a gender responsive school. Thirdly, the book is tried to elaborate concepts of gender responsive pedagogy which pursued by gender responsive lesson planning, concepts of gender responsive teaching and learning materials, and approaches of gender responsive language use in classrooms. Then after, the book also tried to notice issues of gender responsive classroom set up, gender responsive classroom interaction, gender responsive management of sexual maturation, addressing sexual harassment, supportive gender responsive school management systems, and monitoring and evaluation activities. Generally, the reviewer found the hand book as a very imperative teacher's guide to get gender equality. I learnt various basic gender responsive concepts which I did not come across through my teacher hood or student hood times. Accordingly, my understanding of the book instigated me to declare that authors are prominently the strugglers who put their cornerstone for developing countries to activate their commencement towards gender equality. Explicitly, importance of gender responsive school for gender equality is briefly stated. Each unit of the book is guided and sustained by own objectives and unit based activities respectively. The hand book as well indicates the specific activities of teachers, counselors, school heads, and the school in general in line with gender equality. It also presented sample lesson plan and evaluation checklist for teachers. In general, the hand book tried to inculcate, and tried to aware teachers how they can make whatever aspects of teaching and learning processes to be gender responsive. In another way, the reviewer of the hand book found drawbacks from it, such as authors' usage of vague or general term, for e.g., specific needs of students, might be confused users mainly teachers. The authors' inclination towards small group discussion by devaluing traditional

setting arrangement for gender equality may not workable in the instructional process, because it depends on school contexts. The consideration of classroom set up and interaction, and indication of management of other gender constraints to learning by the lesson plan is impossible to do so. *The authors' expression of sexual maturation as "normal process of growing up" might be paradox. Sexual harassment by itself is an abstract issue which needs collaborated efforts from different stakeholders mainly from school and the community at large, but the authors of this hand book did not show this properly. Finally, the hand book did not considered values of co-curricular activities for gender equality.*

Keywords: Book Review, Gender, Pedagogy, Responsive

Introduction

This teacher's hand book has twelve units, and the organization of it is disclosed here with. Firstly, the concept of gender is stated. Secondly, background to a gender responsive school is clarified. Thirdly, the book is tried to elaborate the issues of gender responsive pedagogy. Then after, ideas of gender responsive lesson planning, concepts of gender responsive teaching and learning materials, and approaches of gender responsive language use in classrooms are stated respectively. The book also attempted to notice different instructional activities such as gender responsive classroom set ups, gender responsive classroom interaction, gender responsive management of sexual maturation, addressing sexual harassment, supportive gender responsive school management systems, and monitoring and evaluation endeavours.

Since there is no absolute perfection in this universe, this book has its own strengths and drawbacks. So, the main objective of this review was to show strengths and drawbacks, and it is organized in relation to the corresponding units of the hand book, as indicated in the first paragraph above.

1. Understanding Gender

In line with this topic, the hand book tried to clarify what gender mean. As to Mlama P., Dioum M., Makoye H., Murage L., Wagah M., and Washia R. (2005:1), gender is a socio cultural classification of women and men. This classification is based on societal norms and values that define the roles men and women should play in society. Gender roles are determined by the society, which assigns different responsibilities to men and women, e.g., cooking for women and decision-making for men. However, Sex roles are purely biological, natural and God-given. They cannot be changed. The man makes the woman pregnant and the woman gives birth to the child and breastfeeds, but the reverse is not expected.

Accordingly, it is possible to generalize the authors' explanations of gender and sex by saying that the former is manmade and the latter is naturally or biologically determined. The reviewer also accepted this elucidation as it is by supporting it with an example. Roles of house building and keeping of cattle, for instance, are given for females, and security related activities too given for males in Afar society. However, this house construction, rearing of animals, and precautions related roles are specified for males, and cooking and child care allied endeavours as well prearranged for females in Amhara society of Ethiopia. But, child bearing and breastfeeding roles are given for all the females found in the world without any change based on place, norm, or culture contexts. This indicates how the gender is socially

constructed and how the sex is naturally given.

2. Background to a Gender Responsive School

Since gender is socially created, gender inequality which is observed in the society, as Mlam P. et al.(2005:4) argued, has an opportunity to diffuse in to school environment via teaching, teacher-student interaction, school management, and the plan and design of the physical infrastructure. Teaching aids found as gender biased; teachers remained poor in terms of identifying specific needs of girls and boys; school administration also ineffective in the areas of addressing sexual harassment, and in having of adequate toilet for both males and females.

Based on the reviewer's further reading, the research finding of Menstrual Hygiene Management (MHM) (2012) directly support what the Mlam P. et al. were argued. As MHM reported, in Amhara Regional State of Ethiopia; female teachers face challenges due to inadequate sanitation facilities in schools. Because, many schools do not have sufficient toilet facilities for men and women, and lack of sanitary bins to dispose of hygienic products which resulted in woman's sense of shame or low self-image. Hence, menstruation often causes physical discomfort, cramps, tiredness and nausea. Accordingly, the schools may not provide a gender responsive environment for effective teaching-learning to take place.

So, to have faire instructional involvement from both sexes, according to the authors' of the hand book, gender responsive school is required. To get such like school environment, according to them, it is vital to undertake gender sensitization of parents, train teachers in the skills for making teaching and learning processes gender responsive, and empower girls with skills for self-confidence. Empowering boys with skills to de-link from gender oppressive attitudes, training the school community to manage sexual maturation issues, training teachers and students in guidance and counselling skills, and providing gender responsive infrastructure etc. are also required.

If so, as they added, the academic, social and physical environment and its surrounding community take into account the specific needs of both girls and boys.

Generally, the hand book tried to state how gender responsive school is vital to treat both boys and girls equally. And if such like environment is found, it is sure how effective teaching and learning *will be conducted. In addition, to advance teachers' level of understanding of gender impartiality in their teaching*, the hand book included stated objectives what the teachers are going to achieve in the given unit, and also unit based activities presented for teachers which can initiate them to read more till they have got the appropriate answers. By doing so, they will improve their thoughtfulness of gender equality.

But, in my point of view, the way the authors of the hand book have tried to explain the phrase *"specific needs of both boys and girls"* seems too vague or too general. Because, *specific need for girls, for example, may to have separate toilet service from males, may be to have "A" score in chemistry subject, may not want to wear school uniform, or may not need to learn physics subject etc.* The same is true for boys. Therefore, the users of the book, particularly teachers may be confused to identify the types of needs which they require to treat accordingly the both sexes.

3. Gender Responsive Pedagogy (GRP)

Although there are many pedagogical approaches such as role play, group discussions, skits, cased studies, study tours available and used, none of them are effective to get gender equality in the instructional process. Thus, the employing teaching methodologies are being did not give equal opportunities for both sexes, and the used instructional materials by the teachers are being aggravated gender partiality.

The main reasons, as Mlama P., et al. (2005:7) argued, are many teachers do not take into account the specific gender needs of girls and boys in planning the lessons; teachers used the traditional net row desks arrangement, teachers are not aware the language they use in the classroom reinforces negative gender attitudes; teaching and learning materials are not scrutinized for gender stereotypes. Teachers also tend to be authoritarian; school management systems do not consider gender in the design and implementation aspects. And school facilities do not provide for the special needs of girls etc.

Therefore, gender responsive pedagogy (GRP) is urgently launched in Sub-Saharan African countries, because the GRP is a teaching and learning process that gives attention for the specific learning needs of boys and girls. And according to Mlama P., et al.(2005:7), it also initiates teachers to consider gender matters in their teaching, in their lesson planning activities, in their classroom management approaches, and in their assessment aspects. A GRP is a teaching and learning process that gives attention for the specific learning needs of boys and girls.

Generally, the hand book indicates the importance of GRP to get gender equality in the instructional activities. To do so, teachers are highly responsible to inculcate the issues of gender in their teaching. For example, they need to consider gender in the lesson plan preparation, they need to think needs of girls and boys in their assessment activities; teachers are required to make their classroom management to be gender responsive, and they also need to use mostly small group discussions. This the *hand book's explicitly showing of what teachers, and school administrations need to do to get gender equality in the school* is highly impressed the reviewer.

However, the authors' inclination towards small group discussion by devaluing traditional setting arrangement for gender equality is not good for me. The types of sitting arrangements, or types of methods of teaching that teachers need to use in their teaching are determined by many factors such as type of contents, class size, and availability of required instructional material etc. Therefore, as I feel, to get gender impartial instructional activities from both sexes, getting of attitudinal change from female and male students is mandatory. To do so, for example, it is important to show for them how they are equally creatures of God, and it is also vital to show how gender is socially constructed – it differs from place to place, and from culture to culture etc.

4. Gender Responsive Lesson Planning

Under this unit, Mlama P., et al. (2005:9), justified the importance of lesson plan, and how teachers can make the plan gender responsive. Though many teachers have skills to develop good lesson plans, making the plans gender responsive requires a special set of skills and attitudes. Accordingly, as to the authors, teachers are expected to deem whether or not their content selection, their preparation or selection of teaching materials, their activity designation, and their selection of methods of teaching

enable him /her to make both boys and girls participate equally in the instructional activities. Besides, teachers also need to emphasize gender responsiveness of classroom set up and interaction, management of other gender constraints to learning inside the classroom, for e.g., sexual harassment, HIV/AIDS, peer pressure, menstruation etc., and feedback and assessment activities.

In relation to this unit, the reviewer came to scrutinize a basic limitation that needs reconsideration in the hand book. Even though it differs from school to school, lesson plan has its own format which needs to consider by the classroom teachers. Elements such as content, methods of teaching, activity, and evaluation are mainly required to found in the format. But, the consideration of classroom set up and interaction, and management of other gender constraints to learning inside the classroom by the lesson plan is not vital for me. Because, it is difficult to determine and indicate by the lesson plan the gender responsiveness of the classroom set up and interaction, and the managing possibilities of some constraints in the classroom.

Therefore, it is vital not to consider such issues as elements of the plan. And teachers are not expected to indicate the gender fairness of the issues by the lesson plan rather by their actual teaching processes.

5. Gender Responsive Teaching and Learning Materials

The authors of this hand book tried to indicate how the instructional materials are very important to conduct teaching and to shape students' mind. But, as to them, the evaluation of the teaching aids from Sub-Saharan African countries, particularly textbooks visualize females as weak, submissive, and passive. And also consider males as assertive, powerful, intelligent, and leaders of the society. For example, illustrations in science textbooks mostly portray only boys as carrying out experiments, and history textbooks generally mention only heroes in liberation struggles, yet it is known that there were also heroines. This indicates how the teaching materials are gender biased.

Therefore, teachers are needed to check gender responsiveness of the materials by assessing the already prepared textbooks, and by treating both boys and girls when they have developing other materials, for example modules, or handouts.

Commonly, teaching and learning materials are frequently gender-biased. Whenever mentioned, girls and women are being projected as passive, shy and weak. And boys and men are being looked as adventurous, inquisitive, courageous, heroic and clever. So, all instructional materials, should be examined and checked, and the newly developed materials also need to be prepared in line with fairly inclusion of both sexes.

6. Gender Responsive Language Use in Classrooms

Since language is an important instrument which enables individuals to communicate each other, it should be used appropriately. Improper language use can convey negative messages and inhibit teaching. Thus, as stated in the hand book, a teacher's constant use of harsh, abusive and threatening language may develop sense of frightens in the students and encumber communication between them. Language can also reinforce gender differences and inequalities and in the classroom often reflects male dominance and relegates females to an inferior position. Therefore, teachers need to enhance students by using hopeful

and inclusive language in the classroom. To do so, they need to re-examine the kind of language they use, to ensure that it is gender responsive.

So, to get gender impartial instructional activities from both sexes, a classroom teacher is expected to reflect gender equality by his or her language usage: initiate girls to learn as males; inform girls can do works as boys; not employ unforgiving, obnoxious and intimidating language, and treat boys and girls as equal partners etc.

7. Gender Responsive Classroom Setup

Gender responsive classroom set up is vital to respond to the specific needs of both boys and girls. This approach, according to the authors, enables teachers to mix girls and boys, and enhances learners to participate as much as equally. Moreover, arrangement of the desks encourages girls to speak out and overcome their shyness; stools in laboratories those are appropriate in size and shape enabling effective participation of all students. Fixtures and visual aids on the walls send gender responsive messages; appropriate shelf heights in the libraries, appropriate size, shape and weight of desks and chairs etc. help to motivate students especially females.

Therefore, it is important for teachers to understand how the arrangement and maintenance of learning spaces affect the quality and gender responsiveness of the education provided therein. And they need work towards accordingly to get gender equality.

Generally, it is difficult to expect effective teaching from the unfavourable classroom organization. For example, an overcrowded classroom makes it difficult to organize seating arrangements that can enhance child-centred learning. Additionally, teachers may have no say about what type of furniture is found in the school. Despite these limitations, an innovative teacher should still be able to organize the classroom set up in such a way that it is conducive to learning. To do this, teachers should be committed and professionally sound.

8. Gender Responsive Classroom Interaction

In this unit, the authors brief how students are not little automaton rather they are boys and girls with gender-specific needs and interests. As they mature enough, their gender roles and relations have an increasing impact on classroom interactions. So, teacher must recognize that this is where such matters as sexual experimentation, sexual harassment, male domination and female passivity come into play. It is therefore, according to them, important to create and enforce a conducive learning environment through classroom interaction that is gender responsive, age specific and respectful.

There are many personal relationships in classroom interaction that have an impact on teaching and learning processes. These are content delivery by the teacher; teacher-student interaction; student-student interaction; teacher presentation (dressing, physical appearance, walking style); student presentation (uniform usage, physical appearance, walking and sitting style, gesture); student behavior (bullying, arrogance, shyness, teasing); teacher behaviour (harsh, arrogance, lateness, drunkenness).

As the authors highlight, therefore, teachers need to interact with students in ways that support and reinforce the participation of both female and male students. They also must remain aware the ways in which students interact with each other, ensure dynamics between them promote equality and respect.

Generally, teacher awareness and worth of student motivation and achievement are decisive components to create relationships among them. Consequently, both teachers and students have to value their contribution. Thus, a student has to feel worthwhile and appreciated, and a teacher needs to recognize that *he or she can have a positive effect on their students' learning*.

9. Gender Responsive Management of Sexual Maturation

In line with this unit, the authors tried to show the concept of sexual maturation, and how teachers need to manage it in their teaching. According to Mlama P. et al. (2005:22), sexual maturation is the normal process of growing up, and characterized by physical and emotional changes. Both girls and boys become self-conscious of their bodies and this has an impact on their self-esteem. Much of the deviant behaviour among boys and girls also more pronounced at this time, as their body and hormonal changes become more evident.

For example, menstruation is discharged monthly from females, but some girls lack the financial resources to purchase sanitary pads and therefore miss school altogether when they are menstruating. Due to this reason, as the authors noted, the rate of absenteeism among girls has been found to be high, as many as three days each month, which amounts to about 30 lessons of one subject per year. This may have an impact on self-esteem, and may be so distracting the learning process in the classroom.

In another way, as boys go through maturation changes, they also go through similar motions of lack of concentration, short attention span and day-dreaming during class sessions. Their voices break, their faces breakout, they experience wet dreams and unexpected erections. Boys also tend to become aggressive because of pressure from their peers and the society.

Therefore, teachers need to be sensitive and offer appropriate counsel to students both girls and boys. Schools in particular should be a site of intervention in reproductive health and rights. As educational institutions, schools also need to teach young people knowledge, skills and values of sexual maturation.

Although sexual maturation is naturally growing process which resulted in physical and emotional *changes in human beings, the authors' expression of sexual maturation as "normal process of growing up" is not good* for the reviewer. Because, knowingly or unknowingly, individuals at this stage are faced by different challenges: females were often absent in class during menstruation and frequent absence led them to drop out from school; youth is the time of initiating sexual experimentation and may include risky behaviour because they still lack experience in decision making compared to adults; boys also tend to become aggressive because of pressure from their peers and the society etc. Therefore, it is advisable to say sexual maturation as naturally growing process which resulted in physical and emotional changes in *human beings instead of saying "normal process"*.

10. Sexual Harassment

Sexual harassment is an untoward practice that students face daily in their schooling lives. It has far reaching implications on the teaching and learning processes. Let say a girl who has just been sexually harassed by a male teacher now sitting in class taught by the same teacher. Such a girl will be traumatized and not be able to concentrate on her studies because the presence of the perpetrator will elicit anger, fear

and resentment that may hinder learning.

Therefore, as Malam,P., et al.(2005:24) asserted, teachers must create a conducive classroom environment that is free of all forms of sexual harassment. This starts with the teachers themselves as educators exercising sexual self-control and avoiding any situation that may lead to sexual harassment. In addition, teachers must see themselves as guardians and remember that they are responsible for the students' safety, welfare and well being. They must, as well, make it absolutely clear that they will not tolerate such activity in their classroom.

Since sexual harassment by itself is abstract, it needs collaborated efforts from different stakeholders mainly from school and the community at large, but the authors of this hand book lack to do so under this unit. Thus, the teacher is being assigned here as the only responsible to abolish this act. In line with this, Teodros (2016) argued that the impact of sexual harassment is largely determined by the readiness and effectiveness of institutional mechanisms to address the problem. The more institutions are well prepared to solve the sexual harassment, the less the impact on the individual victims and the organization at large. This shows how educational organizations (schools) are responsible to create conducive teaching-learning environment for both male and female students.

11. Gender Responsive School Management Systems

Under this unit, Mlama P. et al.(2005:26) aimed to show how the effort to facilitate the gender responsive pedagogy will not succeed if it is not supported by a gender responsive school management system. It is the school management that provides teaching and learning materials which are gender responsive and the management that re-trains teachers in gender responsive pedagogy. In addition, according to them, it is management's responsibility to formulate, apply and monitor rules and regulations that will transform the school into a gender responsive environment. Therefore, educational institutions are required to work with other stakeholders and the society in general collaboratively to achieve safe and danger free school environment for all students.

Generally, the effort to establish a gender responsive pedagogy will not succeed if it is not supported by a gender responsive school management system. More importantly, more complex issues such as dealing with a child who has been sexually harassed, abused, and bullied etc. in the school will require action – and policy standards – by the school management to deal with the perpetrator, the services of the guidance and counselling teacher, and the support of fellow students to ease the stigma. In all cases, the school management sets the tone by being open and participatory itself, by establishing a gender responsive policy framework, and by adopting a zero tolerance approach to sexual innuendo, harassment and abuse.

12. Monitoring and Evaluation

Monitoring and evaluation refer to the systematic tracking and assessment of progress towards making the pedagogy gender responsive. And an effective monitoring system, as noted by Mlama P., et al. (2005:28), covers all aspects of the teaching and learning processes presented in the previous units. To check whether aspects of teaching and learning processes are gender responsive or not, it is vital to conduct this evaluation. To do so, as to Mlama P. et al. (2005:29) argued, it is required to develop

monitoring and evaluation checklist for gender responsive pedagogy.

In general, a sound monitoring and evaluation framework spells out the destination clearly – in this case, gender responsiveness – and serves as a roadmap for keeping track of and assessing progress towards that goal. It will help you stay on the right road, and provide signposts to let you know you are going in the right direction. And it will guide you in determining whether you have actually ended up *where you wanted to be*. Therefore, teachers need to evaluate students' performance regularly by considering gender aspects.

Conclusion

Generally, the reviewer found the hand book a very important guide to get gender equality. I learnt various basic gender responsive concepts which I did not come across through my teacher hood or student hood times. Accordingly, my understanding of the book instigated me to say that authors are prominently the strugglers for the gender equality particularly for the developing countries.

Explicitly, the hand book has its own strengths: it tried to state how gender responsive school is vital to treat both boys and girls equally. To aware teachers about gender responsiveness of their activities, the hand book included stated objectives what the teachers are going to achieve in the given unit, and also unit based activities also presented for teachers which can initiate them to read continually till they have got the appropriate answers. The hand book as well indicates the specific gender specific activities of teachers, counsellors, school heads, and the school. To add more, the hand book briefly shows sample lesson plan which enable teachers to develop gender responsive lesson plan. It also practically indicates monitoring and evaluation format which help teachers to evaluate their instructional activities accordingly.

In another way, the critic of the hand book found drawbacks. Thus, the way the authors of the hand book tried to explain the phrase "specific needs of both boys and girls" is too general. The authors' inclination towards small group discussion by devaluing traditional setting arrangement for gender equality is not workable in the instructional process. The consideration of classroom set up and interaction, and management of other gender constraints to learning inside the classroom by the lesson plan is not vital. The authors' expression of sexual maturation as "normal process of growing up" is not good, because, knowingly or unknowingly, individuals at this stage are faced by different challenges. Sexual harassment by itself is also abstract which needs collaborated efforts from different stakeholders mainly from school and the community at large, but the authors of this hand book did not show this properly. Not only these, but also the hand book did not include and show how to integrate co-curricular activities- such as gender club, mini media club, and the like- with the book so as to facilitate and support teachers' played roles towards gender equality.

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