BOOK REVIEW

Over the past decade, gender issues have found a firm place on the agendas of many developing countries and donor agencies. The traditional campaign for female empowerment has matured into a movement for gender equality that examines the social and structural relationships between men and women and proposes strategies for moving towards greater equality. In Africa, the gender equality movement has made significant strides through the development of gender policies and action plans which aim to provide equal employment opportunities, increased awareness of gender relations within social sectors and mainstreaming of gender issues in all social programs.

Many African education systems are now promoting the socialization and future development of girls and boys and are therefore well positioned to lead the way in adopting strategic interventions that favour gender equality. *Educating Tomorrow: Lessons from Managing Girls' Education in Africa* provides concrete examples of the key role the education sector plays in making progress towards gender equality. This compilation of fourteen case studies, written by practitioners and researchers from Commonwealth Africa, deals with education management issues that range from the positive effects of gender mainstreaming in Malawian primary-level math and science classes, to developing holistic community processes in Zimbabwe that address cultural barriers to girls' access to education. Local voices describe and analyze different approaches for improving gender equity in the access, retention and achievement of girls in school. These professionals offer management insights and best practices that can be transferred to other African educational contexts.

Educating Tomorrow reports from a wide variety of contexts and targets a wide audience that includes: principals, teachers, school counselors, inspectors and local, regional and national government administrators. Each case looks at a different level of the education system from the classroom and

school right up to the community, donor agency and government. While this range of perspectives provides a solid base, it does not necessarily offer a definitive evaluation of what is best practice, rather it serves "to illuminate the tensions, contradictions and ambiguities that underlie the production of educational reform" (p. 5).

In the first section of *Education Tomorrow*, the editors describe the analytic framework and methodology through which the cases were researched and presented. Overall, the book is set within the context of **school effective- ness studies** with specific emphasis placed on evaluating the effectiveness of equal opportunities for both males and females. School effectiveness studies, which began in the late 1960's, have reached no common conclu- sions on whether or not it is the school or the community that has the most influence on a child's performance in formal education (Jansen, 1995). In support of Jansen's theory, the editors suggest that the level of effectiveness of a particular school is associated with a critical mix of management variables. The cases presented evaluate both the internal and external factors (school climate and community), which have an impact on the effectiveness of the school and on student performance. This evaluative framework flows from Hopkins's (Hopkins *et al*, 1994) definition of school improvement:

> . . . schools, in an era of change, can use the impetus of external reform
> to improve or develop themselves, while also focusing on internal reform
> of teaching, learning and management processes. (p. 2)

In addition to emphasizing school effectiveness, *Educating Tomorrow* frames each of its case studies within a management focus. The editors offer the rationale that there have been few studies in developing countries on the management of educational change and that their book is a contribution to school and program studies with a management focus.

What about a feminist or "gender and development" framework for analysis? Although the authors acknowledge that their work could be critiqued for using the theory of management as a framework for analysis or "a reactive accommodation to maleness, rather than producing a feminist perspective" (p. 10) they appear a bit too comfortable in their dismissal of theories of gender and power. While chapter two presents a broad overview of gender issues in Africa and how they relate to girls' educational access and achieve- ment, it also emphasizes that the main focus of the book is not to deconstruct the implications of gender roles in African society, but more to offer tech- niques for how women and men can better operate and manage within existing power structures.

Feminist approaches to management and organizational development do exist and could be further consulted to strengthen efforts at improving girls' access to and attainment in education. For example, reference could be

made to Jane Parpart and Marianne Marchand's (1995) theoretical work linking feminism, postmodernism and development; Cecile Jackson and Ruth Pearson's (1998) feminist critiques of development, policy making and education programs; and Anne Marie Goetz's (1997) work entitled *Getting Institutions Right for Women in Development* which examines the gendered dynamics that structure all organizations in the development field and offers alternative models for project implementation (government, NGOs, multi-lateral organizations).

Despite the editors' decision not to use an explicit feminist framework, a number of management lessons can be learned from the cases presented throughout the book (South Africa, Ghana, Zimbabwe, Malawi, Nigeria, Uganda, Zambia, Botswana, Tanzania). The editors summarize the learnings under four main educational categories: girls' **access, attainment, achievement** and **accomplishment**. Data uncovered in each case lends increasing support for the research being conducted throughout Africa on girls' education issues. General conclusions include:

Girls' enrollment at primary is effectively equal to that of boys and, in some cases, exceeds boys' enrolment. Fewer girls, however, than boys proceed to secondary or tertiary education. Key indicators affecting girls' **access** to education include: poverty, distance from school, early marriage or pregnancy, low value placed on girls' education, low socio-economic status of the family, parents' own education (p. 244).

Drop-out rates for both girls and boys are generally decreasing; more boys than girls drop out of primary overall, more girls than boys drop out of secondary education. Rates of **attainment** are affected by the same features as those related to access, yet they are also influenced by the number of schools available and perceptions of the quality of schooling (especially staffing) amongst parents and the community (p. 245).

There is evidence that the gap between boys' and girls' **achievement** at the primary level is narrowing. In fact, there is no consistent evidence to suggest that boys outperform girls. Girls may not perform as well as boys in "traditional" masculine subjects such as math, science and technology; however programs aimed to make these subjects more accessible to girls and to reduce the gender discrepancies in how these subjects are taught, have contributed to improved performance for girls. Nonetheless, gender disparity in academic achievement is linked to teachers' and community expectations of how girls will perform, girls being expected to do housework rather than to complete their homework, and girls' perceptions of their abilities in particular (p. 244).

The majority of teachers at the primary level are female; however there are more male than female teachers overall. There are fewer female than male teachers in poor and rural areas. In terms of management positions, there are

significantly fewer women than men in senior posts in primary and in secondary schools, at universities and in educational administration and policy leadership. This gender disparity in academic **accomplishments** is mainly a result of male, female and community perceptions that men should be in superior positions and generally that women have lower qualifications than men (p. 245).

The final chapter of the book summarizes the major areas of "change management" that educators and administrators should focus on to continue closing the gender gap in the formal school system. These areas are discussed within a management framework that includes: strategic and operational planning, monitoring and evaluation, financial, physical and material resource management, human resource management, training and communications and pedagogy, classroom and curriculum management and managing school climate and ethos (parents and communities). Thody and Kaabwe conclude that in order for gender-based interventions in education to be successful, change needs to be managed both within and outside schools. Although forging change in community attitudes requires patience and skill, the editors strongly believe that it is both possible and necessary. They also stress the important role that schools play in affecting these changes in attitude and emphasize the need for teachers, head teachers and administrators to take strong leadership in motivating these changes. To ensure that the "change process" is manageable, the editors recommend separating broad educational management issues into smaller parts and developing focused plans to address each issue. Although many recommendations are put forward, two of the most salient "change areas" discussed were management planning (preliminary information gathering and strategic visioning) and pedagogy, classroom and curriculum management. These recommendations are nicely juxtaposed – on the one hand, they emphasize the need to develop a long-term, strategic vision in order for projects to be sustainable, while on the other they highlight the need for taking immediate action to improve the day-to-day management of classrooms, pedagogy and curriculum.

For example, Thody and Kaabwe identify the need for **preliminary information gathering** as an essential precursor to developing appropriate gender equity interventions and for ensuring that baseline data is generated to help track project results and guide mid-project adjustments where required. Upfront data collection can also act as a valuable planning tool that ensures adequate-resource allocation, political support and the necessary infrastructure and funds for project sustainability. Two projects in Botswana, a teen mother project and a peer counseling initiative, continuously faced challenges in securing extended funding for their work. More careful presentation of changes to the baseline and improved use of data in project planning could have led to greater self-sustainability of the project. A positive model

for formative planning and information gathering is the joint-planning approach adopted by the Ministry of Education in Malawi, USAID and the local Malawian community in the implementation of the Girls' Attainment of Basic Literacy and Education program (GABLE). Although time-consuming, this joint-planning approach ensured that there was government commitment and ownership of the program and that long-term planning, data collection and monitoring capacity was built in key government agencies to ensure sustainability (p. 246).

Another recommendation, determining the **strategic vision** of girls' education projects from the outset, helps assure that they have realistic long-term goals that are achievable and sustainable within the social, economic and political contexts in which they are operating. Irish Aid's work in resuscitating primary school education in Zambia demonstrates how adopting a participatory approach to vision setting, program design and planning through active consultation with community and government stakeholders can empower local communities to take on decision-making power and long-term ownership of their project. Similarly, CamFed's (Cambridge Female Education Trust Program) program in Zimbabwe initiated a problem-solving approach to help determine the long-term vision for how to increase girls' access to education. CamFed brings together all the individuals and groups who influence girls' lives in Zimbabwe, including parents and guardians, school staff, traditional leaders and local administrative officials. Together they articulate the major barriers to improving girls' education and examine how they can collectively enhance girls' educational opportunities. The editors of *Educating Tomorrow* suggest that most important principle for developing a strategic vision is to ensure that activities are kept to a scale that is within local management capacity and that can be readily institutionalized to ensure sustainability (p. 247).

The editors highlight **pedagogy, classroom and curriculum management** as key "change areas" where significant gender equity results can emerge. Studies in Nigeria, Zimbabwe and Zambia demonstrated that girls' self-esteem in the classroom was raised by increased participation in their learning and through the use of less didactic teaching methods. A case study of a school in Uganda demonstrated that girls were hesitant to assume class leadership positions because rigid teaching methods had decreased their self-confidence. There is also need for improved teaching of traditional male subjects (science, math, technology – SMT). In Ghana, SMT clinics provided an original method for encouraging girls to continue learning and succeeding in these areas; research in Malawi demonstrated that gender mainstreaming in primary science and math brought about positive results for girls (p. 256).

Educating Tomorrow: Lessons from Managing Girls' Education in Africa presents a useful comparative perspective on some of the management strategies

being employed to close the gender gap in education in Commonwealth Africa. Reports on gender-based interventions are thoroughly critiqued and analyzed to ensure maximum learning by the reader and appropriate transferability to other educational contexts. This collection of project successes and challenges demonstrates that educational change must be managed at multiple levels in order to be effective – from the classroom and school, right up to the community, donor agencies and various levels of government. The cases reveal that significant progress has been made not only in the design and delivery of successful gender-based interventions in education, but also in the evaluation and improvement of these interventions for the future. The cases presented in *Educating Tomorrow* should provoke teachers, principals and government administrators to reflect on how well gender-based initiatives in Africa have been designed, managed and modified over the past decade. It will be up to this same group to learn from these stories so they can improve their management practices and ensure continued progress in providing equal access and attainment in education for Africa's boys and girls.

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