

Policy Brief 5



Commission for Gender Equality
A society free from gender oppression and inequality

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Placing Gender in the National Education Curriculum

Assessing progress since the 1997 GETT Report

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1. INTRODUCTION

Gender inequality and the way society treats males and females differently still continues to be perpetuated through the schooling system in general, and school curricula in particular. During the apartheid era, the schooling system played a crucial role in promoting gender stereotyping. For instance, textbooks typically depicted women and girls as subservient, performing menial household tasks, while men were depicted as clever, inquisitive and courageous. Men were portrayed as playing leading roles as heads of households, giving women and girls guidance on which products to choose for cleaning purposes.

It was common to see images of women and girls always in their domestic roles, while men were shown to be professionals, such as doctors, technicians, and school principals. These stereotypes influenced the way in which girls and boys chose their subjects and, ultimately, their careers. The literature review revealed that not only did apartheid South Africa focus on racial segregation and the provision of differentiated and unequal education for the various racial groups, but it also entrenched gender stereotyping in a way that perpetuated the subordination of women and girls in society.

The advent of Constitutional democracy in 1994 brought with it an attempt to address the gendered content of school curricula as part of the broader system of political, economic and social transformation in South Africa. As part of this broader process of transformation, the new government set up a Gender Equity Task Team (GETT) in 1996 to investigate the feasibility of a Gender Equity Directorate (GED) in the national Department of Education, and the appointment of Gender Focal Persons in all provincial departments of education. The task team appointed for this research compiled a report¹ with recommendations on the form and functions of the GED. This report was an important indicator of the seriousness with which the post-apartheid government took gender equality, not only in society in general, but in education in particular.

¹ RSA (1997), *Gender Equity in Education* (Report by the Gender Equity Task Team, Department of Education)



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After the release of the GETT report, The Commission for Gender Equality (CGE) undertook its own study on gender equity in the Department of Education (DoE).² The study was conducted in 2006/7. It sought to assess progress in terms of gender mainstreaming in the Department of Education³ after the release of the

² CGE *Report on Gender in Education*, 2007

³ The study was conducted prior to the national Department of Education being separated into two departments in 2010 (Basic Education and Higher Education). It is possible therefore that some of these directorates have been changed.

GETT report in 1997. The purpose of this Policy Brief is to summarise the findings of the study and its policy recommendations. Our aim is to facilitate dialogue between the CGE and relevant policy makers, at both national and provincial levels in the education sector where it concerns the progress made in mainstreaming gender in the national curriculum.

2. STUDY APPROACH AND METHODS

The study was mainly a desktop analysis of research work conducted on gender equity in the education sector. The investigation also analysed international, regional and sub-regional instruments that South Africa had ratified. Also, in-depth interviews were conducted with informants in the education sector, including officials from departments of education at national and provincial levels, as well as officials from a number of trade unions in the same sector. Officials from teacher unions were interviewed: the South African Democratic Teachers Union (SADTU); Suid-Afrikaanse Onderwysers Unie (SAOU); National Professional Teachers Organization (NAPTOSA) and Professional Educators Union (PEU).

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Attention was particularly paid to the work of the [GED] in terms of gender mainstreaming efforts in the national Department of Education, exploring some of the recommendations contained in the GETT report. In particular, the CGE study

focused on the process of infusing gender equity into the national curriculum, with specific attention on the General Education and Training Band (GET). The study sought to examine and assess the progress made, or the lack thereof in terms of mainstreaming gender in the national curriculum.

Four directorates were targeted: Education Management Development and Governance (EMDG); Gender Equity; Curriculum, and Teacher Education. These were specifically selected, because they formed the core of the General Education and Training Band, while the GED is the central structure in terms of gender mainstreaming in the education sector.

3. THE FINDINGS – NATIONAL LEVEL

3.1. National Department of Education

A brief background is given in the following paragraphs of each directorate in order to assist the understanding of their links to the GED and their respective roles in promoting gender mainstreaming in the DoE. However, the CGE also explored a number of key issues and challenges across the different directorates, such as the level of understanding of gender equity or equality, gender mainstreaming, gender in learning areas, gender training, evaluation of learner support materials and challenges in gender programming.

3.1.1 The Gender Equity Directorate (GED)

This GEU fell within the broad scope of the department's Programme 5 Quality Promotion and Development).⁴ While this programme provided strategic direction for the development of educational policies and programmes, the Gender Equity Directorate developed policies and programmes to promote gender equity, non-racialism and moral values in education.⁵

⁴ Department of Education, *Manual on the Promotion of Access to Information*, 2006, p. 13

⁵ Ibid, p.13

The GED also revealed that it had no direct links with the Teacher Development Directorate, because teacher education fell within the higher education sector, where institutions of higher learning are autonomous.

The GED used the terms ‘gender equity’ and ‘gender equality’ in line with definitions contained in the GETT report⁶ and the National Policy Framework.⁷ Gender equality is regarded as “a situation where men and women have equal conditions for realising their full human rights and potential. Equality is understood to include both formal and substantive equality; not mere simple equality to men.”⁸ The GETT report defines gender equity as the promotion of equal opportunities and fair treatment for men and women in their personal, social, cultural and economic agendas.

It was found that the department had no formal policy on gender mainstreaming that would guide its implementation. Three drafts were in place at the time, but none of them had been adopted. The staff composition of the directorate was made up of a Director, Chief Education Specialist, Deputy Chief Education Specialist and an Administrator. In terms of gender

training for the GED staff, some training had been provided on gender studies. For instance, a certain amount of training was provided by the United Nations and other local training institutions and service providers. The GED did not have its own internal training programme, but did occasionally organise short courses for its staff members through the University of Pretoria. It was found that this directorate did not play any role in setting quality educational standards, including through the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA). It was also not clear what kind of skills development and training was offered to Gender Focal Persons (nationally and provincially). As a result, the capacity of the directorate to discharge its quality assurance responsibilities over training programmes offered to Gender Focal Persons was doubtful.

The GED also revealed that it had no direct links with the Teacher Development Directorate, because teacher education fell within the higher education sector, where institutions of higher learning are autonomous. Given that such institutions had the power to develop their own curriculum, the GED had not at any time inquired into the contents of their curricula.

In order to understand how the GED interacted with other directorates, the GED Director indicated that the directorate played a significant role in the conceptualisation of several directorates’ projects, such as the Women in Management (WIM) programme, to ensure that they are gender-sensitive. However, because it is small, the GED staff played a minimal role in the implementation of other directorates’ programmes. Their main task was to support other directorates only in terms of understanding the concept of gender and how to institutionalise it. The GED therefore perceived its role as being only supportive of other directorates in terms of gender mainstreaming in their programmes.

⁶ See RSA (1997), *Gender Equity in Education* (Report by the Gender Equity Task Team, Department of Education)

⁷ Office on the Status of Women (1998, South Africa’s National Policy Framework for Women’s Empowerment and Gender Equality, p. xviii

⁸ *Ibid*, p.xviii



3.1.2. The Curriculum and Assessment Directorate

This directorate falls under Programme 3 (General Education and sub-programme GET Curriculum and Assessment). The programme “manages the development, implementation, monitoring, evaluation and maintenance of national policy, programmes and systems for general education and assurance”.⁹ This is one of the three sub-programmes responsible for developing and implementing the curriculum and related programmes and systems for general education, and for evaluating and maintaining policy initiatives.¹⁰ In-depth interviews held with unit staff members sought to establish the extent to which gender is instilled into, and then implemented, in the curriculum processes in the General Education and Training (GET) band.

It was found that gender was located in the life orientation learning area, which entails issues of discrimination relating to HIV and AIDS, gender stereotyping, and gender violence. All learners were given the opportunity to participate in this learning area. It was also noted that gender policies and programming were placed under the Gender Equity Directorate. This directorate was responsible for offering in-house curriculum-specific training programmes throughout the system, based on a model that would be cascaded down: the national office would train the provincial officials, who would in turn establish training teams to train teachers. This cascading model has been widely criticised as inadequate for effective training. It was widely seen as having failed to prepare officials and school-based educators for the implementation of Curriculum 2005 which was generally considered to be complex.¹¹ It became clear, from the views of the respondents,

⁹ Department of Education, *Manual on the Promotion of Access to Information Act no. 2, 2000*, p 12

¹⁰ Ibid

¹¹ Department of Education, *Report of the Review Committee on Curriculum 2005, 2000*, p.55

that the directorates were running separate programmes which lacked common approaches from a gender perspective. This led to criticisms that policies and programmes to promote gender equality within the DoE were implemented unevenly.

The Curriculum Directorate argued that they had never received guidelines from the GED on how to approach gender mainstreaming. They stated that its function was not to monitor the materials in use. It was considered to be the work of the provinces to monitor accredited publishers' compliance with the departmental guidelines. However the GETT report has emphasised the need for an integrative approach towards ensuring that gender issues are visible in all sections, such as curriculum development, special needs, etc. Anne-Marie Wolpe, Chairperson of the GETT, has also pointed to the need for "a working party to be established to interrogate all aspects of Curriculum 2005 in order to ensure that gender equity issues and attendant problems identified in the report are addressed".¹² This was not done.

3.1.3. The Teacher Education Directorate

This directorate fell under the Programme on Systems Planning and Monitoring: sub-programme 1 (Institutional and Human Resources Programme). It is responsible for "developing policies and programmes for promoting the development of educators and of management and governance capacity, and evaluates qualifications for employment in education".¹³

Their work was explored in terms of its role and responsibilities in the implementation of the Draft National Teacher Education Policy.¹⁴ The discussion revolved around the gaps that were identified in this policy,

and included exploring ways in which the CGE could make inputs into the current in-service and pre-service teacher development programmes. A number of key issues emerged. These are:

- a) Even though gender seems to appear in almost all education policy texts and statements, there was no mention of gender in the draft Teachers of the Future policy document. The challenge therefore is to ensure that the teacher curriculum becomes gender-sensitive.
- b) It may be necessary to get 'buy-in' from deans of the schools of education through the Initial Professional Education and Training (IPET) or in-service programme. The aim is to ensure that the teaching of gender studies becomes compulsory and not an elective option in the IPET programme.
- c) The Teacher Education Directorate can recommend to the South African Council of Educators (SACE) that all teachers who participate in Continued Professional Teacher Development (CPTD) programmes should be trained on gender studies, so that they can implement gender requirements as reflected in the eight Learning Areas. This creates space for the SACE to work closely with the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) to ensure that the private providers who offer the training are accredited and provide relevant programmes that are in alignment with the SAQA standards-generating bodies.

Based on the views of staff at the Teacher Education Directorate, it would appear that there was lack of co-operation between the Directorate and the GED of the Department of Education. Staff from the Directorate stated that the GED did not make inputs into the draft document on teacher education policy. The staff also stated that no guidelines had been received from the GED in terms of how to approach gender mainstreaming in the

¹² Linda Chisholm & Jean September (2005), *Gender Equity in South Africa* (HSRC Conference Proceedings), p. 128

¹³ Department of Education, *Manual on the Promotion of Access to Information*, 2006, p.12

¹⁴ Department of Education, *National Policy Framework For Teacher Education and Development in South Africa*, "More Teachers, Better Teachers" Pretoria, 2006

directorate. All these statements pointed to fragmentation and lack of co-operation in gender mainstreaming and policy implementation.

3.1.4. The School Management and Governance Directorate

The work of this directorate is crucial, given that it oversees the implementation of education policy in schools. While the South African Schools Act¹⁵ gives various powers to school governing bodies to develop school policy and to prepare school managers to fulfil their management roles, this directorate runs programmes to ensure gender-sensitive curriculum development at school level. Of particular importance was how the curriculum is being used in order to combat gender discrimination in schools. The work of this directorate is also crucial in ensuring that parents, especially those who are members of School Governing Bodies (SGBs), are empowered to promote a school curriculum and policies that are gender-sensitive.

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However staff also revealed that that the GED has not provided guidelines on how to mainstream gender in its activities. Despite this the Directorate appears to have worked closely with the GED in developing the Women in Management and Leadership (WIM) programme. Prior to the design of the programme, the department had carried out an audit of women in the

education system. The results revealed that, even though education is considered to be a female-dominated profession women were over-represented in the lower levels of the system only; men still dominated at management levels in the new post-apartheid era.

3.2. Views from teacher unions.

3.2.1. Understanding gender equality

Informants from all the teacher unions indicated that their members had never received any formal training on gender mainstreaming. As a result it was not possible to determine their understanding of gender equality or gender equity.

3.2.2. Gender policy development

None of the unions had a policy on gender mainstreaming. PEU, SADTU and NAPTOSA were in the process of developing their own policies during the time of the study. It was not clear whether or not the SAOU (Suid Afrikaanse Onderwyser Unie) had developed a policy on gender mainstreaming.

3.2.3. Programmes promoted by the unions

Given the prominence of social violence, especially gender-based violence among learners, in public debates and the public in 2006, all the unions had indicated that in 2007 they would put the spotlight on social violence in schools. The SAOU was to hold a national conference in May 2007 to focus attention on violence in schools while NAPTOSA was to focus attention on HIV/AIDS. It was clear that the unions had sought to place gender-related issues on their agenda at the time of the study.

3.2.4. Challenges facing gender programming

With the exception of the SAOU, the other unions were experiencing leadership

¹⁵ South African Schools Act no 84 of 1996

problems, which impacted on their budgets and gender programming. Even where gender programmes had been identified, these programmes were not considered to be a priority in drawing up budgets.

While the SADTU participant stated that there was no focus on gender in schools, the union believed it had played an influential role in shaping the new curriculum, supporting its rights-based framework. The union considered the new curriculum to be essential in providing young learners with the tools to transform the nation. However SADTU did not support the idea of a dedicated gender focus, but rather preferred an inclusive curriculum which made provision for the inclusion of gender issues, among others. The unions appeared to indicate that teachers in general, and women teachers in particular, were reluctant to prioritise gender mainstreaming because of their heavy workload and lack of training on how to deal with gender issues.

3.2.5. Challenges for the unions

All the unions, apart from the SAOU, referred to internal battles with dominant males occupying executive positions in branches and districts, although they were not represented in gender committees. This is because gender is perceived as women's women. The unions referred to their continued struggles to be allowed to engage with the GED. Some of them mentioned the release by GED's guidelines on gender mainstreaming and their unsuccessful attempts to be invited to participate in the discussions around these guidelines.

4. THE FINDINGS – PROVINCIAL LEVEL

The findings at provincial level were largely in line with those at national level. This section will highlight some of the common emerging issues between the two spheres of governance.

The findings at provincial level were largely in line with those at national level.

It was found that at the time of the study the Department of Education (DoE) appeared to be failing to infuse gender equity into the national curriculum. For instance, there was no official policy on gender. Instead, there were three draft gender- equity policies but none of them had been adopted formally. It was therefore not clear which of these drafts was being used by the provinces. This resulted in considerable confusion and lack of uniformity with regard to implementing gender equity at provincial level. Various provincial departments of education had devised different strategies to address gender issues.

Similarly, teacher unions did not have a gender policy to guide their activities. At the time of the study some unions (SADTU, NAPTOSA and PEU) were busy developing their gender policies, and SADTU in the Eastern Cape felt that putting pressure on government to prioritise gender mainstreaming was not a union function but that of government itself.

There was no common understanding of the concept of gender, yet an understanding of this concept is crucial, as it is through such understanding that government institutions can realise their commitment towards gender equity as contained in education policies and programmes, including the national curriculum.

This study revealed that the DoE did not follow the recommendations of the GETT report, which required that a position paper be developed for each Learning Area so as to guide teachers in developing Learning Outcomes for gender equity. The recommendation went so far as to advise on

topics that could be included in Learning Areas. Yet gender is still not included in many Learning Areas, including the curriculum. Only one Learning Area in the curriculum, Life Orientation, includes gender.

The infusion of gender equality into the learner-teacher support materials initially seemed to be receiving considerable attention from the DoE. All the provinces and the national department reported that standards had been set for publishers to adhere to when developing Learner Teacher Support Materials (LTSM). Publishers who failed to meet the set standards would not be considered for future contracts as suppliers.

There was a lack of in-service training or continued professional development of teachers and DoE officials on the topic of gender. Both the DoE and the unions were failing dismally in this regard. Even senior officials acknowledged that there was training only on the standard curriculum content and not on gender mainstreaming in the curriculum. Where the unions or the DoE provided the training, (eg, in Mpumalanga) such training was not certificated or accredited. The GED in the national office was also unable to assist in providing quality assurance for the training. This undermined compliance with the requirements of the national curriculum.

The GED was failing to influence the pre-service training or the initial professional education and training of teachers to include gender. The directorates responsible for teacher education and gender equity did not seem to be making serious efforts to communicate with the Higher Education Directorate or to influence institutions of higher education to prioritise gender in their curricula to ensure that gender was a compulsory module for trainee teachers.

There was weak commitment to gender-equity programmes in various provincial departments of education, as well as the national DoE. The GED had instituted five programmes, namely Women in Management, Girls Empowerment, Boys Empowerment, Addressing Teenage Pregnancy and Sexual Harassment Programmes. However, not all these programmes were being implemented

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at provincial level. Moreover, the national DoE was not monitoring the implementation of these programmes. This situation was not conducive to serious gender mainstreaming.

Some provinces (eg Eastern Cape and Free State) did not have gender-equity units and GFPs. Gauteng had a gender-equity unit but was understaffed, with only one GFP. The functions of the GFP included dealing with HIV/AIDS and disability. This practice was found to be contrary to GETT recommendations. Unions were faring no better; few of them had GFPs.

Despite the existence of a number of active gender structures, such as the CGE and the Office on the Status of Women (which was transformed into the Ministry of Women Children and People with Disability in 2009), the DoE had failed to take advantage of these structures as a resource to strengthen its capacity to mainstream gender equality.

5. POLICY IMPLICATIONS

This Policy Brief has highlighted the fact that the DoE had, through the appointment of the GETT, identified policy gaps in the apartheid system of education and made recommendations on how to address them. However, the CGE study and the review conference on the GETT report revealed that such recommendations were never given the requisite attention. This poor policy response

to the findings of the GETT implies a lack of strong political will in the DoE to prioritise gender mainstreaming in the country's education curriculum and commit the necessary resources to turn this into a reality. The absence of a formal national policy on gender mainstreaming by the DoE is the clearest indicator of lack of willingness at departmental leadership level to drive a clear policy response to the findings of the GETT in order to prioritise gender equality in the national curriculum. Such lethargy at national level in terms of prioritising gender equality has understandably been replicated at provincial level, including among some of the teacher unions, which implies a less than conducive policy environment for promoting gender equality in the education sector in South Africa.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations were formulated to inform policy responses and interventions towards mainstreaming gender in the education system.

- The DoE should develop a clear gender policy framework to guide the mainstreaming of gender equality in the national curriculum in South Africa. This will assist in providing national strategic policy leadership in mainstreaming gender equality in the country in general, and at provincial level in particular
- It is recommended that the DoE conduct an audit of gender mainstreaming activities in the education sector to determine the level of progress achieved in the promotion of gender equity by departments of education at national and provincial level.
- The recommendations of the GETT report should be adopted and implemented.
- Implementing gender equity must be supported by the establishment of supportive structures in departments of education at national and provincial levels, with the GED as the central driving force.
- Relationships and communication among stakeholders, especially the DoE directorates, should be strengthened. There should be strong links between the DoE, the CGE and other structures promoting gender equity.
- When assessing LTSM for gender inclusivity, the DoE must include multiple stakeholders, including academics, teachers' unions and organisations specialising in the promotion of gender equality.
- The CGE should, where possible, provide support to the DoE in terms of developing capacity to mainstream gender equality in the sector
- The provision of gender training for teachers, including gender planning and programming, is essential to underpin the mainstreaming of gender equity in schools.
- The provision of training in gender mainstreaming for DoE officials at national and provincial level should be prioritised to ensure that they provide the necessary support and guidance to teachers on the ground.
- It is crucial for relevant stakeholders in the sector to engage in a national dialogue that will lead to common approaches on how to bring the higher education sector in general to develop teacher training programmes that will incorporate gender mainstreaming – for instance, the DoE should enter into serious dialogues with teacher training institutions of higher learning on ways to ensure that gender is made a compulsory and not an elective option in the IPET programmes.
- Gender should be taught as a subject in schools, from the phase of early childhood development onwards.

MANDATE:

Section 187(1) of the Constitution of South Africa reads: "The Commission for Gender Equality must promote respect for gender equality and the protection, development and attainment of gender equality." The CGE is a catalyst for the attainment of gender equality. Section 187(2) grants the CGE "the power, as regulated by national legislation, necessary to perform its functions, including the power to monitor, investigate, research, educate, lobby, advise and report on issues concerning gender equality."

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