

Teaching in Zimbabwean Schools: An Exploration of the Manifestations of Gender Insensitivity in the Curriculum

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ABSTRACT The purpose of this qualitative research was to explore some of the manifestations of gender insensitivity in the school curriculum. This study was part of a larger research on the impact of the school curricula on career aspirations and choices made by girls in a patriarchal society, Zimbabwe. The main research question guiding this study was what are the manifestations of gender insensitivity in the school curriculum? In pursuit of answers to these questions, a purposive sample of 40 participants comprising 20 teachers and an equal number of girl pupils was used. The design adopted was an exploratory case study and the methods for data collection used were focus group discussions and individual face-to-face interviews with teachers and pupils respectively. Data analysis was done using discourse analysis techniques. The study revealed that a great deal of patriarchal values and ideologies are embedded in the curriculum and these tend to polarize the educational and career aspirations of pupils as boys and girls. It also emerged from the study that schools continue to play a role in the structuring and reproduction of gender role stereotypes and disparities. The study's recommendations were that the Zimbabwean school curriculum needs a complete overhaul if it is to promote learning equity. Educators also need to refrain from the use of biased, sexist, stereotypical and prejudicial discourses in their interaction with learners.