

## **An Evaluation of the Gender Sensitive Nature of Selected Textbooks in the Zimbabwean Secondary School Curriculum**

**Edmore Mutekwe and Maropeng Modiba**

*University of Johannesburg, Department of Education Studies, Auckland Park Kingsway  
Campus, Johannesburg, South Africa*

*E-mail: edmorem@uj.ac.za, mutekwe@yahoo.com*

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**ABSTRACT** The aim of the study was to evaluate the gender sensitivity and balance of selected textbooks in the Zimbabwean school curriculum. An evaluation instrument was designed to evaluate the books and focus group interviews were carried out with a purposive and gender stratified sample of students. The data management and analysis procedures adopted covered both the content and discourse analyses of selected history text books in addition to the interpretations of participants' verbatim statements from the focus group discussions. The study revealed that a great deal of patriarchal values and ideologies are embodied in the textbooks. The textbooks analysed were found to contain gender biases, imbalances and stereotypes. The interviews' carried out revealed that students were overtly and covertly affected by the gender representations in textbooks. In depicting traditional gender stereotypes, textbooks shaped students in particular ways and affect their academic achievement and career choices. The study recommends that textbooks in schools should be carefully selected to avoid those that are full of gender biases or stereotypes. Where possible textbooks could be rewritten to ensure gender sensitivity in order to avoid producing and peddling gender role ideologies and stereotypes that differentially reinforce boys and girls for not only different but highly gender polarized social roles.