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Policy Interventions

Gender Analysis of the Data

The data obtained using the critical policy indicators will provide both quantitative and qualitative information that is crucial in the development of a gender-sensitive educational policy, and must be considered together in the formulation of policy recommendations and operational objectives. Figure 1 provides a simple example.

The need for flexibility

Countries vary widely in terms of educational indicators as well as cultural, social and economic specifics. These guidelines are intended, not to provide blanket generalisations covering this wide diversity, but rather to be adapted and prioritised according to countries' specific national circumstances.

The process of interpreting the data and translating it into practical techniques for prioritising areas for policy intervention must therefore be responsive to local cultural norms and practices, and must meet the needs of the people in that setting. The guidelines that should be selected and utilised are those that are particularly suited to the individual country situation. Important considerations in this regard are:

- ◆ the needs in the particular setting;
- ◆ priority considerations, given the triggers for change;
- ◆ the extent of the willingness to change; and
- ◆ resources available to effect the change.

The data generated from the research on critical policy indicators must be relied upon to guide priorities in specific settings. In Figure 2, an example demonstrates the difference which a knowledge and understanding of the particular setting makes in the interpretation of quantitative data. The example also underlines the importance of obtaining qualitative information as a supplement to quantitative data.

The quite different actions called for in these two situations where precisely the same quantitative data are observed, emphasise the need for flexibility and examining the context in the planning and mainstreaming processes, as well as the necessity for detailed information and data analysis.

Even in a single setting, the available data are often differently interpreted, and can create problems in terms of policy direction. Barbara Bailey (1997) presents quantitative data on education in the Caribbean, which show the obvious gap in favour of females in literacy at both secondary and tertiary levels of education in the region. This and other similar quantitative data have been used by Errol Miller (1994) to justify a male marginalisation thesis, and have led to calls for an examination of male under-achievement in education in the Caribbean. Lindsay (1997) challenges this on the basis of the author's reliance on quantitative data and a narrowly focused methodological approach. She deplores the lack

Figure 1 Using Quantitative and Qualitative Data in Policy-Making

Quantitative Data	Qualitative Data	Recommendations	Policy
More boys than girls do science and mathematics at secondary and tertiary levels. This gender difference is significant.	Science options are offered at the same time as home economics and office procedures. Girls are channelled into the latter options.	Subject options should be available to both male and female students; where choices are offered these should not reflect sex stereotypes.	Male and female students should have equal access to all subjects in the curriculum. Within five years, the number of girls doing science at secondary and tertiary level should double.
	Science texts refer to scientists in masculine terms, and do not feature women as scientists.	Examples of female scientists should be identified and deliberately introduced in class discussions.	Detailed textbook analysis and review should be undertaken, with a view to developing and bringing into use, within five years, texts which are gender-sensitive, and which do not retain old gender stereotypes.
	Mathematical problems are usually framed in terms of 'masculine' activities.	Attempts should be made to develop equivalent mathematical problems using 'non-masculine' examples.	
	Most science teachers are men.	Attempts should be made to employ more female science teachers.	More women should be encouraged to become science teachers.
			The number of female science teachers should double in five years.
	In science classrooms, male teachers rarely interact with female students, and such interaction as occurs is usually demotivating for the girls. Boys have a similar experience in home economics and office procedures classes where the teachers are predominantly female.	Gender awareness training must be provided in teacher training colleges as well among practising teachers.	Within three years, all teacher education institutions must integrate gender issues into their courses and ensure that graduates are knowledgeable about gender issues, how these operate and affect the learning process. Practising teachers must participate in summer programmes designed to increase their awareness of these issues and their effects. This should be accomplished in five years.

Source: Leo-Rhynie, 1996

of in-depth investigation and analysis which would bring to light deeper underlying issues. Bailey, discussing the data she presents, which have been used in support of the male under-achievement lobby, notes that:

“These data have been taken as an indication that equality of educational opportunity for women is not an issue in the Caribbean and that women are the privileged group in this respect. Little attention is being given to the fact that in spite of this supposed privilege, women in the region ultimately are at a greater disadvantage in the market-place and in the home. The gender gap in favour of females at the tertiary level merely indicates that men need lower levels of education than women do to enter the labour market. A study conducted by the UN Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (UNECLAC) and the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) in

1995 found that women need to have 4 more years of schooling in order to compete for salaries similar to those of men. This has been confirmed by World Bank studies which show that even though women in Latin America and the Caribbean enjoy equal opportunity for education as men, women generally are paid less even when they have the same education and length of work experience.”

Bailey, 1997: 22

Figure 2 Examples of Two Different Situations with the Same Quantitative Data

Country A			Country B		
Quantitative Data	Qualitative Data	Policy Priority	Quantitative Data	Qualitative Data	Policy Priority
Ratio of girls to boys at secondary school increased from 1:3 to 1:1 over the previous five years	Perception by boys that school is not relevant to their adult lives, and their plans for the future	Examination of the curriculum to assess its usefulness/ relevance to the male student population and revision where indicated	Ratio of girls to boys at secondary school increased from 1:3 to 1:1 over the previous five years.	Increase in school building programme over the past five years has created more secondary school places, especially for girls	School building programme to continue with emphasis on places for both girls and boys
	Boys not attending school in order to work and earn in the informal sector	Determining how to encourage boys to attend school: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ legislative solution ◆ media awareness programme ◆ positive male role models 		Media programmes encouraged parents to allow their daughters to complete secondary education	Media programmes to continue
	Girls interested in school, encouraged by mothers to qualify themselves. Teenage pregnancy rate down.	Strengthen the initiative and encourage more young women to attend school. Increase family planning services.		Great interest shown by both girls and boys in completing secondary schooling and accessing tertiary level education	Devise strategies to maintain the level of interest and build motivation

Source: Leo-Rhynie, 1996

The Policy Statement

Using the results of the gender analysis, a policy statement should be formulated in consultation with a wide range of stakeholders. The policy formulations should be made the subject of community meetings, board meetings, staff and student meetings, home-school association meetings, past students associations meetings; and it is through this discussion that the priorities for particular communities and specific institutions should be agreed. One approach to this would be to send a letter to all schools, universities and training institutions referring to the problems outlined above and policy options to address them, and to request students, staff and other workers to discuss these policy guidelines and make proposals on how to implement them.

The policy document must be explicit in terms of what is required and the system must be supportive of those requirements. Where a top-down strategy is employed, establishing a policy environment in which gender has clearly been taken into

account should be a priority objective. A policy document which emanates from a policy environment that is not obviously gender-aware and gender-sensitive, but which merely seeks to fulfil external requirements, may have very little effect. The decision-making hierarchy of the Ministry of Education for example, should reflect the numerical gender balance being required of School Boards and institutional staff complements.

Policy documents emanating from Ministries of Education ought to:

- ◆ be clear;
- ◆ state goals which are desirable at a national level;
- ◆ include a timeframe for achievement of these goals so that progress can be measured;
- ◆ focus on the more strategic and long-term gender needs of the system. The short term, practical needs can usually be met through operational objectives set at the local level; and
- ◆ include proposals which are enforceable, particularly where legislation is involved. Where, for example, compulsory attendance is being legislated for all students, of both sexes, up to age 16, there must be mechanisms to ensure that this is monitored and that there are sanctions for those who do not comply.

Resource Allocation

The Ministry of Education should also have the resources to implement those recommendations and policies that are national in scope. So, for example, when there is a requirement that the curriculum of the teachers' colleges include a gender focus within a three-year time span (policy statement), the resources need to be available to prepare the teacher educators to develop their knowledge in this area, to carry out the necessary curriculum review and to integrate gender in their programmes of study (institutional objectives).

The fair and equitable allocation of the benefits of education is influenced by an understandable focus on other major areas of concern, such as issues of quality and relevance, declining financial resources, the reduction in the status of the teaching profession, the perceived fall in educational standards, the speed with which technological change is taking place, and the importance of new technology in development. In many Commonwealth countries, these concerns have to be addressed in a context of significantly reduced resources (Sangster, 1994: 205).

It is important, however, that the allocation of these resources does not benefit one group to the detriment of others. Where resources for education are already limited, considerations of gender in education policy and planning should be made a priority, so that resource allocation can be equitably made. Cultural factors, which often exert a critical influence on the involvement of females and males in the education process, should also be considered and addressed.

Policy Framework and Action Points

There follow a number of action points which governments may wish to adapt to suit their national circumstances and use in the formulation of policies, plans, programmes and projects.

School management, teachers and school staff

- ◆ organise gender training/planning workshops for teaching staff, in co-operation with school management, parents associations and teachers unions, in order to provide school staff with an understanding of the construction of gender;

- ◆ develop binding guidelines and disseminate them to all educational and training institutions;
- ◆ publish a newsletter containing information and data on gender and education;
- ◆ establish, for all staff, selection and promotion criteria that include specific expectations in relation to the achievement of gender equity;
- ◆ develop materials to assist teachers with assessment and evaluation procedures, including examples of assessment tools that consider the different experiences, interests and aptitudes of girls;
- ◆ encourage teachers to change their practice in a particular way, through, for example, promotion or allocation of resources; and
- ◆ ask schools to submit a plan of action to achieve gender equality and equity, and an annual report on progress made in this respect.

School organisation and practice

- ◆ ensure that the school dress code enables girls to engage in sport and active play;
- ◆ establish staffing procedures to ensure that women are represented in leadership positions;
- ◆ ensure that the timetable provides girls with real flexibility in their subject choice; and
- ◆ provide for the physical needs of each girl in relation to privacy, hygiene and clothing.

Curriculum

- ◆ ensure that gender considerations are included in all educational and training curricula, thus providing a curriculum which in content, language and methodology meets the educational needs and entitlements of girls and which recognises the contributions of women to society and values female knowledge and experience;
- ◆ include in the curriculum a range of teaching methods which best promote the active participation of girls in learning;
- ◆ provide access for girls to all areas of the curriculum, and establish the skills and confidence necessary to utilise this access;
- ◆ in partnership with the school community, provide information on conception, contraception, pregnancy, childbirth, child rearing, parenting and relationships;
- ◆ develop a curriculum which critically examines the gender distribution of work in families, households and paid work, and the relative values attributed to these different kinds of work by society; and
- ◆ provide advice on subject choices to ensure that girls do not limit their training and employment opportunities by the patterns of their study.

Educational materials

- ◆ ensure that textbooks and tests are gender-sensitive as regards the language, images and examples used therein.

Career counselling and guidance

- ◆ sensitise people engaged in career counselling on gender issues, thus ensuring that they also direct women to sex-atypical occupations;
- ◆ disseminate information to students and parents about career counselling and vocational guidance;
- ◆ devise a career guidance programme to encourage bright girls to further their education in areas where they are traditionally under-represented, such as technical and scientific areas; and
- ◆ guide boys and men also into 'female' occupations, which could eliminate gender segregation in jobs.

Girls' perceptions and attitudes

- ◆ stimulate girls to plan on working careers by changing their expected time allocations to both the labour force and home and their own perceptions of their roles and capabilities;
- ◆ establish mechanisms for identifying, supporting and monitoring girls at risk; and
- ◆ provide programmes for school teachers, counsellors and parents in order to enable them to understand those issues which place girls at the risk of not completing their education, issues such as income support, housing and childcare.

Parents' attitudes and involvement

- ◆ set up parent-teacher organisations to increase the awareness among parents of the benefits of educating and training girls and to involve parents more with schooling in general; and
- ◆ engage parents and the community in the development of programmes and materials that enhance and develop awareness of the impacts of gender construction.

Employers' attitudes

- ◆ induce employers to change their attitudes and practices as regards gender and the perceived roles of women. This could be done by requiring that contractors tendering for government contracts do not discriminate on the basis of gender and take affirmative action to ensure non-discriminatory treatment in recruitment, training and upgrading of minorities, or by threatening to enforce action by government agencies on the basis of anti-discrimination legislation.

Sex education

- ◆ give advice to young girls and boys on avoiding unwanted pregnancies and on reproductive health, including protection against HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases.

Sex-based harassment

- ◆ develop programmes that teach girls and boys effective communication and conflict resolution skills;
- ◆ develop policies at school level to demonstrate that sex-based harassment is unacceptable behaviour and ensure that it is punished; and
- ◆ provide programmes and materials that inform school and wider communities about the underlying causes of sex-based harassment and its impact on the education of girls.

Vocational training

- ◆ prohibit discrimination in vocational education and apprenticeship programmes;
- ◆ take affirmative action to recruit more women to vocational education and apprenticeships;
- ◆ ensure that girls are familiarised with vocational education and apprenticeships, set up orientation programmes and provide connections with potential employers; and
- ◆ require government contractors to provide on-the-job training opportunities for women or to participate in training programmes that include women and minorities.

Affirmative action

- ◆ put in place a programme to give preference to women in terms of education and training and career advancement until such time as women are available in sufficient numbers and at sufficiently high levels to ensure fair competition.

Image of women

- ◆ devise strategies to project a more positive image of women's working abilities and promote their entry into non-traditional occupations. Non-governmental organisations can play an important role in reorienting society's and men's attitudes to acceptance of new employment roles for women.