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GENDER SENSITIVITY AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT: A REPRESENTATION FROM MACMILLAN SOCIAL STUDIES TEXTBOOKS FOR BASIC EDUCATION IN NIGERIA

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This study was conducted to analyse the representation of gender in Lower Basic Schools 1 to 6 Macmillan Social Studies textbooks in Nigeria. An adopted Gendered Representation Inventory (GRI) developed by The International Network for Researches on Gender Representation Textbooks (2009) was the instrument used for the analysis. The results of the findings were presented using frequency count and percentages. The results showed that Macmillan Social Studies textbooks which are used in Nigerian lower basic schools tend to promote gender inequalities. It was also found that there was gender bias portraying male dominance over female in terms of representation. It was on the basis of these findings that it was recommended that preparation of Nigerian textbooks especially Social Studies Textbooks should be gender sensitive. Nigerian Social Studies textbook writers should portray women and female without bias to gender differences.

Keywords: *Gender; Macmillan Social Studies textbooks; Stereo-typed roles, Social role.*

INTRODUCTION

In many cultural contexts, the differences between girls and boys, and between men and women, are regarded as a natural phenomenon. Children are classified at birth usually by observing their genitals into two categories: males and females. On the basis of the category to which they belong, society considers them qualified to do certain things and expect certain attitudes and behaviour in relations to their sexes. Their rights, duties, social, economic and political roles also differed from the childhood to the adult lives. Societies are organized around this basic social differentiation, which is evident in the life of individuals.

These internalized gendered constraints provide a new understanding of the inequalities which exist between men and women. These inequalities lead to a male and female bipolarization, and accompanied by the construction of a hierarchy in most societies. It is a social construct as the unequal relations between men and women – male domination, female subordination – are neither

predestined nor immutable. They are the outcome of a society's "gender relations" (Meighan, 1981). These relations are usually unfavourable to women and detrimental in economic, social, legal, health and cultural terms. Consequently, gender-sensitive policies and measures are designed to protect women in most spheres of life.

There seems to be a consensus that gender equality is a cross-cutting policy goal that applies to all institutions. The United Nations Millennium development Project (MDGs) has indicted that gender equality includes three main dimensions viz: (a) capabilities, including education, health and nutrition; (b) access to resources and opportunities, including access to economic assets, such as income and employment, and to political opportunities, such as gender representation in political bodies; and (c) security, including reduced vulnerability to violence and conflict (Millennium development Goals Report, 2005). Together, these dimensions contribute to women's individual well-being and enable women and girls to make strategic choices

and decision (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, 2006).

But lately, more consideration has gone into what gender equality in education should involve. Herz (2006) was one of the first to present a simple formula for improving gender in education: making girls' education affordable, making education a practical reality, making schools more girl-friendly and improving education quality. One of the aspects of gender equality in schools is to offer quality education in schools. Several studies (e.g. Chaudhry, 2007) suggest that standard aspects of schools quality have a stronger impact on girls' education than boys' education for sustainable development. For instance, a study in Bangladesh found that increases in teacher quality raise girls' enrollment or reduce their drop-out probability, while having no effect on boys. It was also observed in the same study that having separate toilet facilities for boys and girls increased girls enrollment and improved their grades.

According to Education For All (EFA) Global Monitoring Report (2008), to improve the quality of learning, there are three sets of provisions that are essential to be considered both in general and for girls in particular. These are: (1) reforming the textbooks; (2) enhancing the number and quality of teachers, including female teachers; and (3) making the teaching-learning process itself, including the school environment, more child- and girl-friendly. Reforming the textbook is the concern of this paper, because instead of the textbook to promote gender equality, it tends to widen the gap more.

The roles of textbooks are fundamental to the learning of gendered roles. Representations of male and female are legitimized by a high-status medium. Once assimilated by children, the "gender system", that is "the set of norms, beliefs, practices and knowledge that organizes relations between men and women" (Ahmed, 2006), will have repercussions on female children's academic achievement and choices as well as on their experience as a whole. It is from this angle that the influence of textbooks representation was examined in order to form basis for the promotion of gender equality. Sadker and Zittleman (2007), found that students spend as much as 80 to 95 percent of classroom time using textbooks and that teachers make a majority of their instructional decisions based on the textbook. Also, a study conducted by Baker and Jones (1993) in Canadian found that more than 75% of their basic school

teachers use textbooks for 70 to 90 percent of classroom time. This finding indicated the level at which textbooks are essential materials in teaching and learning process and their impact on gender equality.

Little researches have been conducted on analyzing textbooks from gender perspectives. It is important to start analyzing textbooks used in schools and messages that they are sending to children. They present important messages to children on how social relations in their society should be organized. It is often important to examine how male and female characters, roles and occupations are presented in textbooks. But there is a question that one needs to ask, the question is, how far has the modern day textbooks with special reference to Social Studies textbooks been able to promote gender equality in Nigeria, considering the vital role of Social Studies in the society?

Social Studies is a subject that integrates the contents of all other Social Science courses and it was introduced into schools curriculum to solve societal problems that cannot be solved by a single social sciences course (Jekayinfa, 2006). There seem to be an important mission in many textbooks. But researches conducted by different scholars have revealed that women are placed in position of subordination and passivity in many textbooks (Khalid, 2008 & Jekayinfa, 2006). Such presentations in textbooks affect children's psychological development which also necessitated this study.

Educational performance of students is also said to be dependent on the extent to which education systems promote the rights of male and female children (Djangone, Talnan & Irié, 2001). In view of the importance of textbooks in teaching and learning, this study examined gender representation in Basic School Social Studies textbooks.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study was to assess gender identities and gender social roles in the Lower Basic School Social Studies textbooks.

Specifically, the study investigated the:

- (a) Disparity in the numbers of appearance of both sexes in the Lower Basic School Social Studies textbook in Nigeria.
- (b) Types of occupation associated to both sexes in the Lower Basic School Social Studies textbook.

- (c) Social status occupied by both sexes in the lower basic school Social Studies textbook.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The following research questions were formulated to guide this study.

- (a) Is there equality in the number of appearances of both sexes in the Lower Basic School Social Studies textbook in Nigeria?
- (b) Is there difference in the types of occupation associated to both sexes in the Lower Basic School Social Studies textbook?
- (c) Is there difference in the social status occupied by both sexes in the Lower Basic School Social Studies textbook?

METHODOLOGY

This was a descriptive survey. An inventory developed by International Network for Research into Gender Representation in Textbooks (2009) in Brugeilles and Cromer was adopted for the study. Quantitative statistical method was used to analyse the collected data. The aim was to reveal a textbook's gender system. This design was based on an understanding of how representations of male and female were shown in Macmillan Social Studies Textbooks for Nigerian schools. This process rested on the following basic principles:

- (a) Gendered representations were embodied in characters, and it was therefore through these that gender imbalances could be identified.
- (b) An exhaustive inventory of characters was compiled, on the basis of a questionnaire:
 - (i) By counting the characters according to sex and age: (men; women; boys; girls; ungendered such as pupil, child, etc.); unspecified. The count showed where the characters feature in the textbook (whether in the text, pictures, pupils activities or exercises).
 - (ii) Noting the features of gender description: character type, educational function; role figure; social, occupational and/or family functions, attributes in terms of physical characteristics or items; character and personality traits; activities and actions;

These various elements contribute to the development of the multi-faceted portraits and portrayal of an imaginary society to be found in social studies textbooks. It was by comparing and

contrasting these various indications that the analysis would reveal the differences in gender roles, using the identities conveyed in Social Studies textbooks. Once this analysis of gendered representations has been completed it would be possible, on the basis of comparable quantitative data, to indentify the mechanisms by which one gender was discredited or discriminated against.

One Social Studies textbook was purposively sampled for the study (Macmillan Social Studies textbook), in line with Ujo (2000) who maintained that a researcher could choose a sample for study, if the sample possess the characteristics of the population. Thus, Macmillan Social Studies textbook was sampled because it was the textbook recommended by the government for Lower Basic School and also met the curriculum content of Universal Basic Education (UBE). Data collected was presented using frequency and percentages.

RESULTS

The results of the findings were presented as follows:

Research Question 1: Is there equality in the numbers of appearance of both sexes in the lower basic school Social Studies textbook?

Table 1
Summary of Number of Individual Characters by Sex in Texts and Illustrations

<i>Individual Characters</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Women	187	11.1
Men	244	14.5
Girls	296	17
Boys	687	40.9
Ungendered sex	104	6.2
Unspecified sex	162	10
Total	1,680	100%

Table one showed the percentages of the characters of both sexes that appeared in the textbook. As shown in the pie chart 28.1% of the total population of characters in the textbook represented females while 55.4% were males. 6.2 % and 10% characters were ungendered and unspecified sexes.

Research Question 2: Is there difference in the types of occupation associated to both sexes in the Lower Basic School Social Studies textbook?

Table 2
Summary of Occupation of Characters by Sex in Texts and Illustrations

	Girls	Boys	Women	Men	Un- ende- red	Un- peci- fied
Social activity	20	82	12	96	4	11
Occupational activity	31	97	18	87	12	22
Vocational skills	12	81	21	89	17	20
Professional skills	21	92	23	93	26	13
Unskilled activity	76	23	69	32	11	08
Domestic activity	55	14	45	11	7	12
Buying activities	43	23	57	22	11	17
Care or caring activity	12	07	81	17	9	18
Total	270 (15.8%)	419 (24.6%)	326 (19.1%)	447 (26.2%)	97 (5.6%)	121 (7.1%)

Table 2 reveals occupational activities that were predominant to females as low in vocational and professional skills, with unskilled activity, domestic activity among others having high score on the female graph. However, the male dominated the professional, social skills and vocational skills but with less scores in unskilled, domestic, and caring activity among others.

Research Question 3: Is there difference in the social status occupied by both sexes in the Lower Basic School Social Studies textbook?

Table 3
Summary of Social Class of Characters by Sex in Texts and Illustrations

	Girls	Boys	Women	Men
Upper class	12	76	22	88
Upper Middle class	21	86	12	95
Lower middle class	54	55	34	77
Working class	21	83	55	69
Poor	85	31	88	21
Total	193 (17.7%)	331 (30.5%)	211 (19.4%)	350 (32.3%)

Table 3 shows the percentages of social class of the sexes in the Macmillan Social Studies textbook (books 1 to 6) in favour of male. Female representation is 37.1% while male 62.8%.

DISCUSSION

Macmillan Social Studies for Nigerian Lower Basic Schools textbook from 1-6 has a total population of

1,680 pictures (i.e appearances) of human being. 931 (55.4%) of these pictures were male while 481 (28.1%) represent females. Also in terms of occupation, Macmillan Social Studies text showed that prestigious, professional and skillful jobs in the society were commonly attributed to males rather than females. The males lead and occupy the most vital occupation in the society. While females were second. Macmillan basic two textbook of pages 34 and 35, as well as basic 4 textbook at pages 24 and 104 elucidated this argument by showing the male sex as Engineers and Doctors, while the female sex as typists and Nurses.

As shown in the textbook, women were restricted or found to be occupying domestic roles and were always found in the home. The text shows a girl child washing plates, bathing baby, mother cooking food for the family, washing clothes, taking care of the house and the children. While men were engaged in outdoor activities. Positions such as that of the head of a village or community such as Oba, Emir, Chief, Governors, President, Nationalist leaders, name of governors and their states as shown in the Macmillan Social Studies textbook were represented by male sex.

Macmillan Social Studies textbooks which are mostly being used in Nigerian Lower Basic Schools tend to promote gender inequalities that are prevalent in Nigerian society and culture. The teaching materials such as Macmillan Textbook for effective teaching and learning Social Studies portray images of males and females in a gender insensitive manner which in a variety of ways demoralize pupil's values, attitudes and perceptions which negates cordial gender relationship. This goes against the principles of human rights for which Nigeria is a signatory. The girl child is placed in a disadvantaged position as far as her education is concerned as revealed in this analysis. The implication is that young children absorb whatever they are taught by their teachers and do not often question what they read. Even as they are growing up, they are less likely to challenge the biases that do not immediately threaten them unless they are actively encouraged to do so.

Thus, the findings tend to downplay their aspirations and contribution to national development. This is because of the way they are portrayed in the textbooks as being inferior compared to their male counterparts. This finding is in agreement with that of Weitzman (2000) in his study conducted using 18 pre-school p books and was chosen as the best for that y

America. This shows that picture book characters reinforce the traditional sex role dominance of men over women. Females were grossly under represented with 261 pictures of male compared to 23 pictures of female, among other findings.

Thus, pupils as young as they are, need to develop and should be encouraged to develop positive attitudes and values which foster development, gender equality and equity. This is because the images, pictures, texts, contents, illustrations, words and pronouns in textbooks are considered as sending hidden messages to the children, which may likely influence their lives, learning habits and interests as well as motivation for learning and contribution to the development of their society.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Social Studies textbooks are of paramount importance in today's educational system, because they constitute the basic framework of learning, using symbolic reflections of the societies that tend unwittingly and unintentionally to embody a substratum of patriarchal cultures (Ahmed, 2006). But they use illustrations which are discriminatory against girls and women despite all the efforts made by human rights activists and through government policies and programmes to balance gender inequality in the society. Interestingly, no one disputes the need to ensure that socialization aids are consistent with universal human rights principles in order to meet a collective ideal of sustainable development and peace across modern societies.

Social Studies textbooks, taken as a whole, are therefore practical and powerful tools for introducing a process of social enlightenment which can help the individual find fulfillment according to his or her potentials and his or her desires rather than according to the attributes of his or her sex and its associated gender consideration. Thus, on the basis of this, the researchers recommend the following:

- (a) Nigerian textbooks especially Social Studies textbooks should be gender sensitive.
- (b) Nigerian textbook writers and Social Studies textbook authors should portray the roles and responsibilities of women and female children beyond domestic area.
- (c) The Nigerian textbooks in other subjects such as Mathematics and English

Language should address the issues of gender inequality.

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