

Femininity and Masculinity in English Primary School Textbooks in Kenya

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Abstract

School textbooks as important mass media and gender socialization agent play a crucial role in determining the pupils' worldview of female and male gender in the society. Gender responsiveness is one of the emerging issues that have attracted major debates in various forums including in the education system in general and textbook publishing in Kenya in particular. This study examines the portrayal of gender images in primary school English textbooks using "Let's Learn English series" published by Kenya Literature Bureau as a case study. The findings indicate under-representation of female gender in authorship, editorship, typesetting, photography and illustrating the LLE textbooks. The findings further reveal that male gender outnumber the female gender in usage of characters portrayed in illustrations, photographs, names and titles used to refer to the genders. The study shows that the LLE textbooks have tried to use gender inclusive, neutral and gender sensitive language. The study recommends regular in-house staff training on gender issues, developing elaborate assessment checklists for identifying gender stereotypes in textbooks and development of a more gender inclusive curriculum in tandem with Kenya's developmental aspiration where men and women are viewed as partners in development.

Key words: Femininity, masculinity, gender images, English, school textbooks, Kenya

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