

Femininity and Masculinity in English Primary School Textbooks in Kenya

John M. Kobia

*Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology,
Department of Languages and Literature Education, Kenya*

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*

Introduction

Textbooks worldwide are vital means of mass media in the society. Teachers and pupils view textbooks as sources of authority. In some cases the textbook is taken to be the Gospel truth. Obura (1994) notes that textbooks are the key instructional materials. Textbooks occupy a unique place in the instruction of the pupil. Textbooks are the most potent instruments, which help in building up the desirable attitudes in children (Sumalatha, 2004).

Textbooks remain one of the versatile agents of socialisation in the society. Textbooks are the sources of information in teaching and at the same time play the role of image forming. According to Mkuchu (2004) textbooks shape attitudes by transmitting a society's culture. Gender images and roles are crucial part of any culture, therefore, the manner in which female and male genders are portrayed in textbooks contribute to the type of images that learners develop of male and female in the society.

Various declarations and resolutions have been made and numerous conferences held aimed at promoting gender equity in the education system. For example, the 1979 Convention of Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) recognised the need to eliminate gender stereotypes in education and more specifically the textbooks. The convention resolved, among other resolutions that, "Any stereotyping concept of the roles of men and women at all levels and in all forms of education... should be eliminated... in particular by revision of textbooks and school programmes (UNO, 1979, p.7).

Despite this resolution, gender stereotypes continue to persist in school textbooks. This is in spite of the fact that textbooks are crucial tools in the teaching and learning process. Textbooks are basic carriers of the content that is delivered to the pupils at various levels of learning. Towards this end, it is

accepted that, school textbooks are the instruments, which play a very important role in preparing the future actors in society by shaping their attitudes and giving them a direction in life (Mbilinyi, 1996).

The textbooks published over the years for use in primary schools in Kenya have fallen short of incorporating gender equity, thus perpetuating male dominance and women subordination. The school system is an important socialising agent hence textbooks are vital means of mass media to propagate society's values and aspirations. It is against this background that the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology through Kenya Institute of Education, incorporated gender responsiveness as one of emerging issues to be addressed by school curriculum through textbooks in all subjects (K.I.E., 2002).

The critical role of English language in implementing the goals of education and curriculum in Kenya cannot be overemphasized. Language textbooks worldwide play an integral and important role in the curriculum (Ojha and Roul, 2003). According the guidelines set by the Ministry of Education in Kenya, publishers are expected to publish gender sensitive language books for use in primary schools. Over the years, Kenya Literature Bureau, a state publisher has been publishing English language series, **Let's Learn English** for use in primary schools in Kenya. The need to incorporate gender responsiveness among other issues necessitated the revision of the textbooks.

Statement of the problem

It has been the policy of the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology in Kenya to eliminate gender stereotyping in the education system particularly in the school textbooks. Through Kenya Institute of Education, the body charged with responsibility of curriculum development, the ministry revised the school curriculum in 2002 to include gender responsiveness as one of the emerging contemporary issues in the society.

The publishers were expected to study and interpret the curriculum in order to produce textbooks according to the set guidelines by the MoEST. For a textbook to be approved for use in primary school by K.I.E., it must pass some set criteria including gender responsiveness. Despite these policy statements aimed at publishing textbooks that are gender friendly, gender stereotyping still prevails and gender equity in primary school textbooks to a large extent has not been realized in most subjects including English.

English is the medium of instruction in the Kenyan education system in primary schools apart from Kiswahili and mother tongues. Therefore, English textbooks are important agents of socialisation and the images of men and women in them; shape the perception of the learner at an earlier age on the expectations and roles of each gender in the society.

Although a good deal of scholarly work on gender images in the mass media especially newspapers, radio and advertisements have been done, little has been researched on the gender images in textbooks as a form of mass media in general and English language in particular. So far, since the new curriculum started to be implemented in 2002, no intensive and systematic research, as far as the writer is concerned, has been done to determine the extent of portrayal of gender images in the revised English primary school textbooks.

Theoretical inclinations

This article is guided by the views expressed within the gender theory. Gender theory recognizes equal potential while allowing for differences between the genders (Handrahan, 2005). Over the years, most studies or research have used various brands of feminism as a basis for theoretical framework. Feminism as a theory has its own limitations as far as gender analysis is concerned. Gender theory is a more comprehensive feminism that includes men and women.

Gender theory investigates the social organization of sexual differences, constructed and/or inherent. Gender is ascribed normative aspect, focused around the human concept of sex, a biological, physical division, that extends to a broad social construction, informing, shaping, limiting ways of being both masculine and feminine.

Feminism began with acknowledging and understanding the position of women. Gender theory, an outgrowth of its ideological feminist base, is the next step that acknowledges and understands how

bringing women into research projects illuminates, shapes and defines men and masculinity (Handrahan, 2005).

Gender theory seeks to understand the roles, implications and potential of male and female interaction. In this study, focus is on English textbooks (*Let's Learn English*) published by Kenya Literature Bureau. Gender theory is a sum of three key aspects, which are focused in this study. These aspects are women's lives, men's lives and the interactions and products of the male and female converse. This theory can be diagrammatically represented thus:

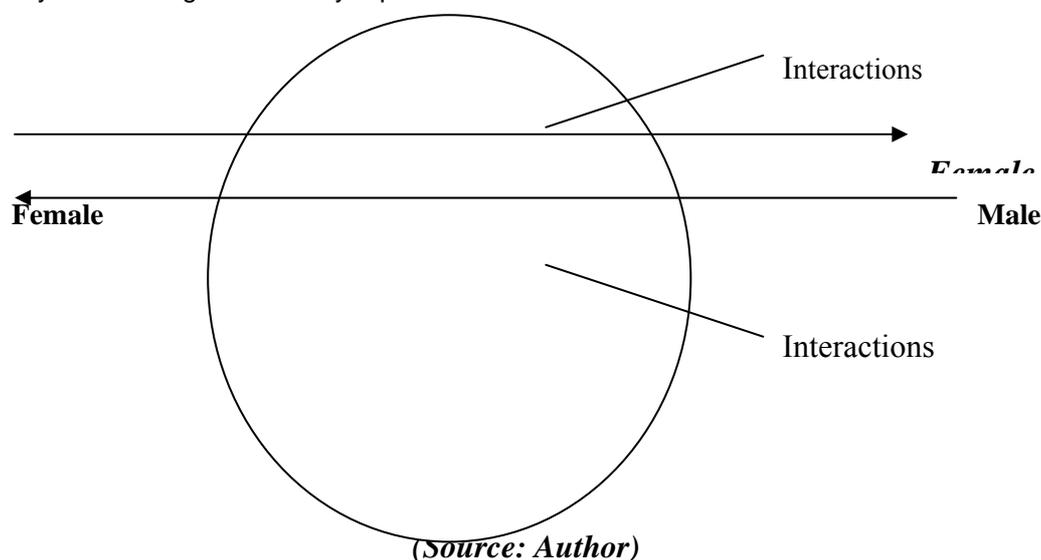


Fig. 1: Male and Female Interactions Model

Methodology

Research Design

This is a descriptive study using both quantitative and qualitative approaches. Content analysis of male and female images was used in analyzing the portrayal of female and male gender in the 4 sampled *Let's Learn English* textbooks.

Population and Sample

English primary school textbooks in Kenya formed the population for this study. However, for sampling purposes, *Let's Learn English*, series was selected purposively to participate in the study.

The study was restricted to primary English School textbooks used in Kenya after the new curriculum was implemented. *Lets Learn English* series were sampled for content analysis to examine the portrayal of gender images in the textbooks. It is worth to note that first edition of LLE were published using the 1992 syllabus. The analysis in this study is limited to editions after the 2002 syllabus was implemented. This study has not done a comparative study of the two editions of each LLE. Out of the 8 titles of LLE a total of 4 LLE textbooks have been selected for content analysis. These are the textbooks that are currently in use in primary school after the phasing out of the 1992 syllabus textbooks last year (2005).

In content analysis of the primary English textbooks (LLE), to determine the depiction of gender images, illustrations and texts were examined. The following categories were selected for analysis in the textbooks to investigate the portrayal of gender images:

- Composition of staff involved in the process of production of the LLE series.
- Frequency of occurrence of male and female characters in the textbooks.
- Personality traits of the characters as portrayed in the textbooks.
- Occupations, roles and other related activities.

- Language use in relation to female and male characters.

Sampling Procedures

Since it was not practically possible to study every primary English textbook in Kenya, due to time and financial constraints, purposive sampling was used to select **Let's Learn English** series published by Kenya Literature Bureau. Purposive sampling is a deliberate non-random method of sampling which aims to select a sample of the textbooks with predetermined characteristics. The predetermined characteristics in this case were English primary school textbooks published by oldest publisher in Kenya, parastatal and had enjoyed monopoly of publishing textbooks in the past.

The primary English textbooks published by Kenya Literature Bureau are **Let's Learn English** series from standard one to eight. To select which class or level to participate in the study, the researcher selected two classes, each in lower and upper primary levels totaling to 4 levels as represented in Fig 3 below.

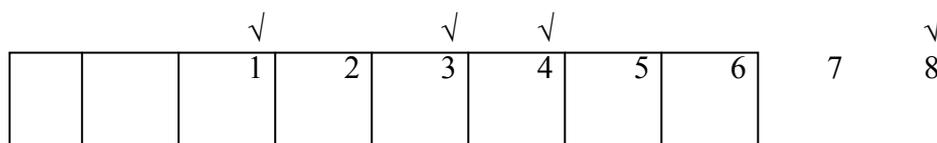


Fig. 3. Levels of LLE Textbooks, which Participated in the Study

From Fig. 3 above, the researcher selected **Let's Learn English** textbooks for standard 1, 3, 4 and 8. The decisive factor for selecting was the lower limit and upper limit at each level that is lower primary and upper primary. Therefore content analysis of images of female and male gender was analysed in 4 **Let's Learn English** textbooks used in primary schools in Kenya.

It was important to base selective on various levels because the members of the authors' panel for each level were not the same and even the number of authors in each level differed. Due to this it was imperative to study various levels of LLE series to find out how the different authors portrayed gender images in their titles for a balanced and critical analysis and conclusions.

The following LLE primary school English textbooks were content analysed in this study:

1. *Lets Learn English*, Standard 1, by T.K. Ngare, S.W. Muriu and C.M. Gecaga. Published by Kenya Literature Bureau, Nairobi, Reprinted Edition, 2004.
2. *Lets Learn English*, Standard 3, T.K. Ngare, C.M. Gecaga, S.W. Muriu, Published by Kenya Literature Bureau, Nairobi, Second Edition, 2004.
3. *Lets Learn English*, Standard 4, C.M. Gecaga, T.K. Ngare, F. Wambui, M. Emali, Published by Kenya Literature Bureau, Nairobi, Second Edition, 2005.
4. *Lets Learn English*, Standard 8, T.K. Ngare, C.M. Gecaga, N. Ndungu, J. Maina, Published by Kenya Literature Bureau, Nairobi, Second Edition, 2005.

Results

The results of the findings of the study have been presented in tabular form. This included categories of frequency of occurrence of female and male characters, occupations, personality traits and language use with a focus on gender perspective. Also presented in form of tables are figures related to personnel involved in textbook production namely the authors, editors, artists and designers. Percentages are also used to give a comparison between female and male characters as portrayed in the textbooks. The discussions of the findings have been done based on the 4 sampled English LLE textbooks.

Textbook publishing involves various people at various stages. The personnel discussed in relation to this study are the authors, editors, artists, photographers and designers. The basic stages involved in textbook production include:

- Studying and interpreting the curriculum
- Identifying and commissioning authors

- Receiving and acknowledging the manuscripts
- Assessment of manuscripts
- Proofreading
- Substantive editing
- Design, layout and typesetting
- Drawing of illustrations
- Taking photographs
- Plate making
- Printing.

This study focuses mainly on those personnel who have a direct contact with the manuscript development before it is printed into books. These are authors, editors, artists, photographers and designers.

Tables 4.1, 4.2, 4.3, 4.4, and 4.5 show the number of personnel and their gender who were involved in the production of the LLE textbooks sampled.

Table 4.1 Authors Involved in Writing of LLE Textbooks

Level/Class	Total	Male	%	Female	%
1	3	2	66.7%	1	33.3%
3	3	2	66.7%	1	33.3%
4	4	3	75%	1	25%
8	4	3	75%	1	25%

Table 4.2 Editors Involved in Editing of LLE Textbooks

Level/Class	Total	Male	%	Female	%
1	1	1	100%	0	0%
3	1	1	100%	0	0%
4	1	1	100%	0	0%
8	1	1	100%	0	0%

Table 4.3 Artists Involved in Drawing Illustrations for the LLE Series

Level/Class	Total	Male	%	Female	%
1	1	1	100%	0	0%
3	3	3	100%	0	0%
4	1	1	100%	0	0%
8	1	1	100%	0	0%

Table 4.4 Photographers Whose Photographs were used in LLE Series

Level/Class	Total	Male	%	Female	%
1	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
3	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
4	1	1	100%	0	0%
8	1	1	100%	0	0%

Table 4.5 Designers Involved in Layout and Typesetting LLE Series

Level/Class	Total	Male	%	Female	%
1	1	1	100%	0	0%
3	1	1	100%	0	0%
4	2	1	50%	1	50%
8	1	_____	_____	1	100%

Data in table 4.1 show that majority of the writing staff (authors) for LLE textbooks are men. For instance, LLE Standard One was written by 3 male authors and only 1 female meaning that only 33.3 % of female contributed to the textbook compared to 66.7% for the male authors. In Standard Eight, the male authors increased to 3 (representing 75%) compared to only 1 female author (25%).

Looking at the composition of the writing staff of LLE series it can be deduced that females are underrepresented in primary English textbooks in Kenya. This can be attributed to societal attitudes toward women. Because of traditional gender biased societal attitudes, very few women participate in writing school textbooks not only the LLE series but also other subjects. According to Mbilinyi (1996), book writing, just like other academic undertakings are dominated by men who have had more access to education than women. The underrepresentation of female in authorship of LLE textbooks has a bearing on the portrayal of male and female characters in the English textbooks.

Underrepresentations of female personnel are also featured in other textbook production levels as shown in tables 4.2, 4.3, 4.4 and 4.5. For instance, LLE textbooks were not handled by any female editor, artist or photographer. From the data above, male personnel dominated these crucial textbook production stages with a clear 100%. However, one female typesetter (50%) shared work for LLE Standard Four with a male designer (50%). It is worth to note that in this particular case, layout and placing of illustrations was done by a male designer. The female typesetter only did a few adjustments of measurements to meet the requirements of the printer. As can be deduced from Tables 4.3 and 4.4, no female lent a hand in the drawing of illustrations or taking photographs yet they are powerful medium of communication in textbooks. Absence or underrepresentation of female staff especially at crucial levels has a bearing of on the portrayal of female and male characters as will be seen in subsequent sections.

Cover Page and Portrayal of Gender Images

Cover page of any books communicates in a nutshell the contents contained in the book. The cover page is a powerful vehicle of communication gender messages to the reader. Analysis of cover pages and gender representations in the 4 sampled LLE textbooks is as detailed below.

Table 4.6 Cover Page and Gender Representation in LLE Textbooks

Level/Class	Total	Male	%	Female	%
1	7	3	42.9%	4	57.1%
3	7	3	42.9%	4	57.1%
4	5	3	60%	2	40%
8	9	7	77.8%	2	22.2%
Total	28	16	57.1%	12	42.9%

Data in Table 4.6 reveals that the total number of male characters outnumber female characters in the cover pages of LLE textbooks analysed in this study. The total number of male characters in the sampled textbooks is 16 (57.1%) while female are 12 (42.9%).

The cover pages of the LLE series use illustrations. As was observed in section 4.2 in this chapter, all illustrations were done by men. In most cases, artists are instructed to draw illustrations. For example, an illustration of people at the airport, without being specified the number of female and male characters to be included in the artwork. The artist being a product of the society perpetuates the societal perspective and attitudes of gender images unintentionally through the illustrations by portraying more males than females.

Frequency of Occurrence of Characters in LLE Textbooks

In this study, the calculation of frequency of occurrence of visible male and female characters has been determined using illustrated characters. The portrayal of female and male characters in illustrations is as shown in Table 4.7 below.

Table 4.7 Frequency of Appearance of Characters in LLE Textbooks

Level/Class	Total	Male	%	Female	%
1	550	272	49.5%	278	50.5%
3	657	36	51.1%	321	48.9%
4	452	270	59.7%	182	40.3%
8	658	414	62.9%	244	37.1%
Total	2,317	1,292	55.8%	1,025	44.2%

Data in Table 4.7 above, where the frequency of occurrence of character is presented, reveal that male characters dominate in three out of the four LLE textbooks analysed in this study. Although the number of female characters surpasses male characters in LLE Standard One the margin is very minimal (only 6 characters representing 1.09%).

The general trend of illustrations in the LLE textbooks indicates that the number of male illustrated characters surpasses that of female by 267 characters (11.6%). The total percentage of illustrated male character in the 4 LLE textbooks analyzed is 55.8 and for female characters is 44.2.

There are some illustrations where female characters are conspicuously absent. For example, in an illustration of scouts there is no girl guide (LLE, Std 4, Page. 138). There is also serious omission of women using their own vehicles like cars but men are portrayed using their own car as shown on LLE Std 3, Pages 43, 82, 96 and 101.

The dominance of illustrated male characters in frequency of occurrence can be attributed to the male artists who did the illustrations. As was observed in Table 4.3, there was no female artist who did the illustration on any of the LLE textbooks. The male artists may have perpetuated male chauvinism through their illustrations. This is due to the fact that all the artists were not trained on the need to incorporate gender responsiveness and equity in their illustrations.

Frequency of Occurrence of Male and Female Names in LLE Series

This section discusses the use of names that refer to male and female characters in the four LLE textbooks analysed in this study. According to Kabira and Masinjila (1997) naming or not naming is instrumental in shaping attitudes and perceptions towards characters in a text. This study is guided by the framework developed by Kabira and Masinjila (1997:18) thus:

- Which characters are designated by gender?
- Which characters are not designated by gender?
- Which characters are named?
- Which characters are not named?
- How does naming or not naming contribute to the reader's general impression of the persons in the text?

Based on the above question guidelines, data in Table 4.8 show the frequency of appearance of proper nouns or name of male and female characters in the four analysed LLE textbooks. The names were coded according to their appearance in the text. If the name appeared more than once on the same page the name was counted as one. This happens especially if it is a character in a story. The name may be repeated several times. However if the same name appeared on the next page, it was counted afresh. This is because in this study the page of the textbook was the major focus.

Table 4.8 Frequency of Occurrence of Male and Female Names

Level/Class	Total	Male	%	Female	%
1	95	47	48.4%	49	51.6%
3	115	62	53.9%	53	46.1%
4	358	207	57.8%	151	42.2%
8	320	218	68.1%	102	31.9%
Total	888	534	60%	355	40%

A close survey of data in Table 4.8 reveals that there are more male names mentioned in the LLE series compared to the female names, except in Standard One (49 names translating to 51.6%). However, even in LLE Std. One, the female names are depicted by use of the titles Miss or Mrs. Generally, out of the 888 names identified in the 4 LLE textbooks, women names constituted only 40% (355 names) compared to male names with 60% (534 names).

A further scrutiny reveals that female characters in a way use male names. For instance Mrs. Wafula, Miss Mutiso (LLE Std One); Mrs Kinuthia, Miss Okemwa (LLE Std Three) and Mrs Majani, Mrs Musya (LLE Std Eight). Also, interesting in the study is that when titles Mrs and Mr are used, it is the Mr title that comes first. For instance, Mr and Mrs Huria. The female title is placed in the second place, which is the traditional society's position that women have been assigned.

The prevailing scenario in use of names in the textbooks can be attributed to underrepresentation or absence of female authors, editors, photographers and illustrators in the production of LLE textbooks at various stages. Failure to name some female characters in the textbooks to a large extent makes the female readers not to identify themselves with the characters. It is most likely for pupils to identify with characters who are named. Name is very essential as a tool of identity and the low number of named females in the LLE textbooks may be detrimental to female pupils' learning of the English language which they may interpret to be male's language.

Portrayal of Characters in Occupational Roles and Other Activities

According to Kabira and Masinjila (1997), activities that human beings are involved in can be categorized into three. These are productive activities, which are done to produce goods and services for generation of income. Secondly, reproductive activities, which include collecting water, nursing child-

ren, cooking, fetching firewood, are performed at home for maintenance of family. Thirdly are community activities done for general community welfare like attending public barazas, church activities, funeral activities and church activities. Reproductive and community activities are not paid for.

Table 4:9 Reproductive and Productive Roles by Gender in LLE Std 4

Table 4.9 shows the frequency of productive and reproductive activities of the depiction of male and female characters. The number and percentages is based on illustrated characters in <i>Let's Learn English Standard Four</i> . Productive Roles	M	F	Reproductive Roles	M	F
Teaching	4	5	Chairing a meeting	3	3
Law and order (security)	9	0	Attending to a patient	0	2
Making furniture	0	1	Birthday celebrations	1	4
Photocopying, Photography	2	0	Clearing the compound	5	3
Sports	19	0	Cleaning cars	0	1
Matatu business	1	0	Milking	1	0
Secretarial duties	0	4	Planting & watering trees	7	7
Selling items in a shop	6	1	Graduation celebrations	3	4
Driving passengers	2	0	Dancing	1	21
Electrical fittings	1	1	Scouting	7	0
Presiding over a case	1	0	Fetching water	2	2
Herding livestock	3	2	Rescue operations	4	0
Building and maintenance	5	0	Buying items from a shop	4	6
Pilot	1	0	Picnics, outings & tours	6	6
House construction	8	5	Welcoming visitors	1	2
Removing teeth (dentist)	1	0	Playing football	1	1
Pump attendant	0	1	Washing utensils	0	1
Repairing tyres	1	0	Reciting a poem	0	3
Farming & herding livestock	4	3	Wedding ceremonies	9	6
Total	68	23	Total	55	72
Percentages (%)	74.7	25.3	Percentages (%)	43.3	56.7

Data in Table 4.9 reveals various interpretations of occupational roles based on gender. From the table it can be deduced that more men (74.7%) than women (25.3%) are pegged to productive activities, which are paid for. The data provided also reveals that, more women (56.7%) than men (43.3%) are portrayed performing reproductive roles, which are not remunerated. More women (72) than men (55) are depicted in activities that are not valued and take for granted. These activities include attending birthday celebrations, dancing, washing utensils, fetching water and welcoming visitors.

More men are depicted in more prestigious occupations such as engineers, pilot, judges, dentists and masons. More women are portrayed performing less esteemed occupations as teachers, secretaries and farmers. However, the textbook has attempted to infuse gender responsiveness in few instances. For example, a female carpenter in her workshop (LLE Std Four, Page 145), a female electrician (LLE, Std Four, Page. 44) and a female pump attendant.

As noted in Chapter One, textbooks are important agent of socialisation especially at the primary school level. As Mkuchu (2004) observes, it is true that the socialisation for children who use the textbooks exposes boys to more role models of revered occupations compared to role models girls are exposed to. This kind of gender stereotyping based on occupation is presented according to the pre-conceived ideas about what people do and should do in the society as males and females.

Portrayal of Personality Traits Based on Gender in LLE Textbooks

Personality trait refers to a particular quality in someone's character. Trait may be negative or positive. Table 4.10 below shows the negative and positive traits found in LLE series that have been content analysed in this study.

Table 4.10 Personality Traits Found in LLE Standard Three

Personality Traits	Male	%	Female	%	Total
Smart and clean	5	33.3%	10	66.7%	15
Afraid*	1	50%	1	50%	2
Ambitious	2	66.7%	1	33.3%	3
Hardworking	12	66.7%	6	33.3%	18
Welcoming	0	0%	3	100%	3
Caring	0	0%	2	100%	2
Careful	0	0%	2	100%	2
Responsible	1	33.3%	2	66.7%	3
Wishful*	1	50%	1	50%	2
Playful	7	46.7%	8	53.3%	15
Entertaining	0	0%	2	100%	2
Dutiful	0	0%	1	100%	1
Thankful	2	50%	2	50%	4
Creative	4	100%	0	0%	4
Helpful	2	50%	2	50%	4
Careless*	1	20%	4	80%	5
Knowledgeable	5	62.5%	3	37.5%	8
Indecisive*	0	0%	1	100%	1
Obedient	1	50%	1	50%	2
Adventurous	0	0%	1	100%	1
Polite	0	0%	2	100%	2
Courteous	0	0%	1	100%	1
Studious	9	60%	6	40%	15
Total	50	53.2%	44	46.8%	94

NB: The personality trait with the asterisk * is a negative trait, others are taken to be positive traits.

Data in Table 4.10 show that there has been attempt to reach a balance in the portrayal of positive traits in male and female images. However male images hold the upper hand. Male have 47 positive traits compared to females 37. From the data in Table 4.10 above, there are more negative personality traits associated with female than male. From the analysis, female's negative traits are 7 (70%) while male's negative traits are only 3 accounting for only 30%. More women are depicted as indecisive (100%) and careless (80%) than men.

One of the contributing factors to the above data is that there are more male illustrated characters. Also in terms of names as was noted earlier, there are more male names mentioned than women. The higher the frequency of characters depicted, the more personality traits of the gender will be portrayed. This is why males received higher personality traits in the LLE series analysed.

The LLE series have generally to a large extent depicted more positive personality traits of male and female. However, there are more positive male characteristics, which helps the gender in establishing a higher self-esteem.

Language Use and Gender Images in LLE Textbooks

Most of the language that pupils acquire during their schooling especially in English is through their teachers or the textbooks. Lakoff (1973) argues that society is reflected in the language, with values and assumptions held by the society being mirrored in the language.

According to Kabira and Masinjila (1997) language is one of the most and subtle ways of depicting gender bias through writing. Gender bias in English language textbooks can be portrayed by use of naming, nouns, pronouns, generics and vocatives (Kabira and Masinjila, 1997). Naming or not naming a character in a story for instance is one way of portraying gender bias language. This is because it shapes attitudes and beliefs towards the character in the text. For instance in LLE Std 3 Pages 20-21, a story is told of an officer from the children department but her name is not disclosed. The officer is portrayed being assigned the role of taking care of children, which is an extension of traditional role that women have been assigned by the society.

A close survey of aspects of grammar in LLE series, reveals that there is little gender biased language used against the female gender. However, in some instances language used portrays women in their traditional feminine roles that the society has assigned them over the years. Examples of sentences include:

1. My mother's cooking pot has a lid. (LLE Std 3, Page 40)
2. My grandmother cooks her foods herself. (LLE Std 3, Page 62).
3. Jane should plait the doll's hair herself. (LLE Std 3, Page 62)
4. My mother is feeding the baby (LLE Std 3, Page 112)
5. Today she arrived late than everyone else. (LLE Std 4, Page 199)

The above sentences capture the society's perception and attitudes towards women of which the authors are products of the society. Language as far as male gender is concerned is fair. Boys are for instance portrayed performing masculine roles, which encourage positive personality traits like courageous, innovative, intelligent, dutiful, informed, knowledgeable and curious. A few of sampled sentences below reveal this phenomenon.

1. He sent an email to Maina. (LLE Std 8, Page 220)
2. The boys caught a rabbit the rescues. (LLE Std 3, Page 62)
3. His idea is an interesting one. (LLE Std 4, Page 25)
4. Mr. Momanyi drives the bus. (LLE Std 4, Page 34)
5. Olilo is pretending to be a pilot. (LLE Std 4, Page 52)

From the LLE textbooks content analysed, the masculine pronouns outnumber the feminine. This can be attributed to overrepresentation of male characters as illustrations, photographs and proper nouns especially names of the male gender in the textbooks.

However, the LLE series have tried to use gender sensitive language. Examples of gender responsive language include:

1. She can jump higher than all of us. (LLE Std 4, Page 11)
2. Lillian and Purity were discussing important matters. (LLE Std 8, page 21)
3. Mutiso is cleaning the floor. (LLE Std 1, Page 67)
4. She is a bright girl. (LLE Std 3, Page 186)
5. Dr. J. Wambui spoke to our class. (LLE Std 4, Page 40)
6. He walks to the river daily. (LLE Std 4, Page 118)
7. My mother is very strict but loving. (LLE Std 4, Page 129)

On the other hand, in use of technology, in some instances, the female gender is portrayed as lagging behind. For example, in LLE Std 4, Page 74, a sentence reads: *She used a hoe to till her father's garden.* This sentence depicts that women are not landowners. The land is owned by the male gender in all patriarchal societies. Also using a hoe, in this 21st Century depicts the female gender is lagging behind as far as technological advancement is concerned. Ownership of property is also depicted as man's domain. For instance, this gender portrays men as the major owner's of property: *This car belongs to my father.* (LLE Std 4, Page 120).

More men are portrayed in leadership positions than women in the LLE textbooks analysed. More men are portrayed as politicians than women. For instance, in the series one encounters sentences like:

- Our member of parliament was very impressed. He promised to take us to a trip. (LLE Std 4, Page 111).
- My uncle is the provincial commissioner and I accompanied him to the stadium. (LLE Std 4, page 133).

On language use in the textbooks in the Tanzania situation, Mbilinyi (1996:96-97) observes:

In language there is a little difference between the total number of figures representing boys and those for girls. The number of male pictures is still higher than those representing females.

The above situation also applies to the Kenyan situation after careful analysis of the LLE textbook series. Although the LLE textbooks have attempted to strike a balance especially in language use, there is still much to be accomplished especially in the use of illustrations and photographs.

Summary

Based on the objectives and categories used in content analysis on the LLE textbooks the following is the summary of the research findings:

- Generally there is gender imbalance in the portrayal of gender images in favour of males at the expense of female gender.
- More male authors, editors, illustrators, photographers and designers participated in the production of LLE series. This has led to the marginalisation and underrepresentation of female gender in the English textbooks analysed.
- There are more male characters than females portrayed in LLE series, through the use of illustrations. This can be attributed to the fact that no female artists or photographer participated in the production of the series.
- There are more females depicted in reproductive roles than male. Men are portrayed in productive activities, which perpetuate gender stereotyping in the textbooks.
- On personality traits, it has been observed that more women are depicted in negative personality traits than men in LLE series. Positive personality traits associated with men outnumber women by a large margin. Generally, women have been portrayed as weak, submissive, and dependent. On the other hand, men are depicted as brave, adventurous and hardworking.

- The findings reveal that men are portrayed as leaders while women are followers as far as leadership and power relations is concerned. Very few women hold leadership positions as portrayed as administrators, politicians and holding professional jobs.
- In terms of ownership of property like land, livestock, cars, men are depicted as owners of property of high value.

The findings reveal that the LLE has tried as far as use of language use is concerned. The use of gender-biased language is not very much featured. However, still there is much to be done. It can be said that gender biased language has not been totally eliminated in the LLE series.

Conclusion

From the above summary, it can be noted that although the MoEST, through KIE has emphasised the need for textbooks to be gender sensitive, English primary textbooks are yet to be free from gender bias. The implication, for this scenario is that although the Government of Kenya (GoK) has tried to achieve gender equity in various sectors of the country, still there is more to be done.

Among the issues to be addressed should be after the incorporation of gender responsiveness in the school curriculum, a step further should follow to determine to what extent has it been a success or a failure in all subjects. This is because textbooks remain the first socialisation agent that a pupil meets after enrolling at primary school.

Excessive use of masculine characters, names, pronouns and titles prohibits females from identifying with the text and illustrations. Consequently, the females will have reservations towards the textbooks and finally develop negative attitudes towards the subject concerned.

There are various factors that can be attributed to gender images that are evident in the English primary school textbooks in Kenya. First, publishers lack comprehensive assessment checklists to identify gender stereotypes in the textbooks. Secondly, the evaluation guidelines emphasise more on contents of the topics and conformity to curriculum. Thirdly, more personnel involved in textbook production are men. Finally, lack of regular in-service training on gender issues on the part of staff involved in textbook production.

This study reveals that textbooks have a powerful socialising effect on pupils regarding their attitudes towards gender roles. The gender images depicted in the textbooks reinforces the society's worldview of what it means to be a male or female. Gender images portrayed in textbooks influence and shapes the behavior of boys and girls in the society. Hence the call for more gender responsive textbooks for use at the primary school level.

Recommendations for Stakeholders

Based on findings of this study, the following recommendations are made, which are addressed to various stakeholders in the publishing industry:

- The Kenya Institute of Education should develop a more gender inclusive curriculum. This is because textbooks derive their contents from the syllabus developed by curriculum specialists.
- The Kenya Publishers Association and other institutions involved in publishing school textbooks should organise regular trainings for the personnel involved in textbook production and other instructional materials. The seminars and workshops should focus on gender responsiveness in textbooks.
- Authors need to be more sensitive to avoid gender stereotyping in the textbooks that they write. Authors and publishers should always strive to write and publish textbooks that have positive images of both female and male characters.
- Males and females should be equally represented as main characters, named characters and titled characters in school textbooks.
- Occupations for both genders should not portray the traditional roles assigned to each gender.

- There should be frequent training seminars for classroom teachers on gender issues and how to select books that are free from gender bias.
- Publishers should develop an elaborate assessment checklist for identifying gender bias and stereotypes in textbooks. The checklist should be used by every editor in every subject.
- There should be constant in-house training programmes for editors, authors, designers, illustrators and photographers on various aspects of gender issues in the society.

References

- Biraimah, K.L.(1998). Gender Division of Labour in West African Secondary Schools Textbooks, PhD Thesis, University of Abidjan.
- Bascow, S.A. (1993) *Gender, Stereotypes and Roles* California: Cole Publishing Company.
- Clarkson, P. (1993). Gender, Ethnicity and Textbooks. *Australia Mathematics Teacher*. 49 (2): 14-16.
- Davies, B. (1995). *Gender Bias in School Textbooks*. London: Commonwealth Secretariat.
- Dominguez, L. (2003) "Gender Textbook Evaluation" a paper submitted for the M.A. degree in TOESL, Birmingham: University of Birmingham.
- Dreyfus, A. (1992). Content Analysis of School Textbooks: The Case of Technology Oriented Curriculum. *International Journal of Science Education*. 14(1):3-12.
- Gecaga, C. et al (2004) *Let's Learn English: Standard 1*, Nairobi: Kenya Literature Bureau.
- _____ (2004) *Let's Learn English: Standard 3*, Nairobi: Kenya Literature Bureau.
- _____ (2005) *Let's Learn English: Standard 4*, Nairobi: Kenya Literature Bureau.
- _____ (2005) *Let's Learn English: Standard 8*, Nairobi: Kenya Literature Bureau.
- Gupta, A.F., Lee, Su Yin, A. (1990). Gender Representation in English Language Textbooks Used in the Singapore Primary Schools. *Language and Education*. 4 (1) 29-48.
- Handrahan, L. (2005). Gender Theory, Vol. 3. 3 in the website:
<http://www.feminista.com/archives/v3n3/handrahan.html> accessed November 22, 2005.
- Hartman, J & Judd, E. (1978). Sexism And TESOL Materials. *TESOL Quarterly*. 12:383-393.
- Kabira, W. & Masinjila, M. (1997). *ABC of Gender Analysis*. Nairobi: FAWE
- Kenya Institute of Education (2002) *Primary Education Syllabus Vol. One*, Nairobi: Kenya Institute of Education.
- Koza, J.E. (1994) Females in 1988 Middle Schools Music Textbooks: An Analysis of Illustrations. *Journal of Research in Music Education*. 42 (2): 145-171.
- Kulamo, C.B. (2005). Gender Parity in Political Coverage: A Content Analysis of Major Kenyan Newspapers. M. A. Thesis, University of Nevada.
- Lakoff, R. (1973). Language and Woman's Place. *Language in Society*. 2(1): 45-80.
- Mbilinyi, D. Mbilinyi, M. et al. (1991). *Education in Tanzania with a Gender Perspective: A Summary Report*. Dar es Salaam: SIDA.
- Mbilinyi, D. (1996). Women and Gender Relations in School Textbooks. In Dorothy A. Mbilinyi and Cuthbert Omari (eds) *Gender Relations and Women's Images in the Media*. Dar es Salaam: Dar es Salaam University Press.
- Michel, A. (1986). *Down with Stereotypes! Eliminating Sexism from Children's Literature and School Textbooks*. Paris: UNESCO.
- Mkuchu, V. 2004 Gender Roles in Textbooks as a Function of Hiddedn Curriculum in Tanzanian Primary Schools. Doctor of Education Thesis, University of South Africa.

- Mtambalike, P. (1996). Newspaper Reporting and Gender Relations. In Dorothy A. Mbilinyi and Cuthbert Omari (eds) *Gender Relations and Women's Images in the Media*. Dar es Salaam: Dar es Salaam University Press.
- Mugenda, O. M. & Mugenda, A. G. (1999). *Research Methods: Quantitative and Qualitative Approaches*. Nairobi: Acts Press.
- Napoli, J. Poore, M. & Boudvile, I. (2003). Female Gender Images in Adolescent Advertising. *Australian Marketing Journal*, 11.
- Obura, A.P. (1991). *Changing Image: Portrayal of Girls and Women in Kenyan Textbooks*. Nairobi: ACTS.
- _____ (1994). "Report on Kenya Symposium of Gender and Textbooks". Nairobi: Kenya Institute of Education.
- Ojha, N. & Roul, S. (2004) "Gender Discrimination in Primary School Textbooks of Orisa".
- Otlowski, M. (2005). Ethnic Diversity and Gender Bias in EFL Textbooks. *Asian EFL Journal*.
- Ozdogru, A.A, et.al. "Content Analysis for Gender Bias in Turkish Elementary School Textbooks". In: <http://www.albamy.edn/egre/papers/39EQRE.pdf>. Accessed on 20/11/2005
- Rutashobya, L. (1996) Women's Images in Advertisement In Dorothy A. Mbilinyi and Cuthbert Omari (eds) *Gender Relations and Women's Images in the Media*. Dar es Salaam: Dar es Salaam University Press.
- Sanga, E. (1996) Women and Gender in Radio Programmes. In Dorothy A. Mbilinyi and Cuthbert Omari (eds) *Gender Relations and Women's Images in the Media*. Dar es Salaam: Dar es Salaam University Press
- Sumalatha, K. (2004). Sex Bias in Secondary School Social Studies Textbooks: A Case Study in India. *American Journal of Applied Sciences*. 1(II) 62-63.
- UNO (1979). *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)*. New York: UN.