

# Summary of content discussions for the Development Education Journal on 'Gender'

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For each issue of the Journal the editorial board invites people with interest and expertise in the theme to discuss its potential shape and content. No issue could cover all the topics raised in these discussions, so we include this summary to inform readers of the range of ideas put forward.

The DEA proposed that this issue of the Journal address the following questions:

- Is development education (DE) gendered? Gender explores the roles of women and men. Is this happening in DE and if so, where? Should DE organisations' policy and practice become gendered?
- How is gender reflected in DE in terms of: whose voice; what we teach; who we engage and how?

The following themes and more detailed questions were developed from a meeting held at the DEA on 29 June 2006 and expand on those above.

## **Gender and the journal:**

- Gender as an issue has not really been tackled in the Journal before. Nor it seems in much that the DE sector has done over the years. There don't seem to be that many projects focusing specifically on gender; what there are seem to focus on women and girls.

## **Meaning of gender:**

- Gender doesn't just mean 'women and girls' but that's often how it's perceived – could this be a debate to tackle? What do we mean by 'gender'? Who defines it? How does DE define it? Are there generational differences in perspectives on gender?

## **Women and men in DE:**

- What about the 'feminisation' of DE? It is dominated by women; the practitioners and thinkers are mainly women. Does this work against DE? Is it because it's women who push for change? And it's still 'men at the top', even in DE, which replicates patterns in other sectors.
- Does having a large number of women activists challenge the status quo or just reinforce it? Are there examples of men doing challenging work on gender in DE or challenging gender stereotyping in DE?
- Does the predominance of women in DE influence the content and methodology of what's taught? Are boys disenfranchised by DE methodologies and approaches? Do girls respond differently? What are the positives, the negatives and the implications?
- This gender balance generally appears to be reflected elsewhere; in schools opinion surveys it seems to be girls who are more 'concerned' and there is evidence that teenage girls are the most 'concerned' (eg: in DFID surveys). But are they filling a 'gendered' role, ie: 'being more caring'?

## **DE, gender and development:**

- Is DE sufficiently up-to-date with current thinking and practice on gender and development? Are we taking into account the changes, new literature, etc. and in particular defining gender according to social rather than biological constructs.
- Changes in the role of women, eg: in the South. Challenging the 'old fashioned neo-liberal' debate and listening to Southern voices – what does 'equality' mean for gender roles in the South? What impact have globalisation and the movement of labour had on gender roles and women?

## **Implications for DE practice:**

- How are gender issues being recontextualised in DE work? Is DE 'doing its job' in terms of gender issues, given that it is concerned with social change and tackling stereotypes? Are gender roles presented in a culturally sensitive way or objectified eg: NGOs using images of women as mothers or powerless victims in order to fundraise?
- Has any UK DE organisation mainstreamed gender, made it a core to what they do? This is happening in other European countries. What can DE learn from organisations that have done this?
- Are we working on a false assumption that 'we' (North) have achieved 'equality' and 'they' (South) haven't? Is DE harming feminism in the UK through the way we cover gender in the South? Can we use DE to change patriarchal attitudes in UK society?
- What knowledge is being chosen and by whom, in terms of the content of DE work?
- Are DE practitioners just reiterating the 'norm' and the 'stereotype'? What training is available to combat this? Does your gender (or your awareness/understanding of gender) as a DE practitioner affect your delivery of DE?

The meeting also agreed that there was a need to identify writers and projects to ensure a good gender balance within this issue of the Journal.

This has, in fact, been a difficult issue to find articles for. There did not seem to be many DEA member organisations or contacts within our wider networks running gender-related DE projects and willing to feature them as 'Getting it Right?' articles, nor were there many offers to write theme-related reflective articles about gender. The hoped-for gender balance has certainly not been achieved as most articles in this issue are written by women – about women, but this maybe reflects the discussion points above relating to the predominance of women in the sector.

We would welcome further articles in the Journal that pick up on Gender as a theme. The Development Education Research Centre at the Institute is planning a seminar in spring 2007 on this issue (see p8). There is evidently a lot to talk about, as evidenced by this content discussion. Are we really engaging in this important debate?