

Mainstreaming Gender Equity in the Curriculum Development Division

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Purpose of the paper

This paper is to inform the participants about approaches that have been taken by the Papua New Guinea Department of Education, Curriculum Development Division (CDD) to start to mainstream gender equity across the Division. The information in the paper will also provide a model to introduce and address gender equity issues across other divisions or educational institutions with a diversity of officers. From this conference it is hoped that other divisions or educational institutions would think about how they will implement the *Gender Equity in Education Policy*.

Background information

Gender is a term that is becoming familiar to institutions in PNG. It can be difficult to define because of the diverse cultures of people we have in the country. It is therefore important to define gender at our level so that it brings the correct message that is acceptable to the students, teachers and parents.

This definition is from *Gender Equity in Education Policy*.

Gender refers to culturally accepted ways of being a woman or man. The behaviours and characteristics of women and men are learnt. They are not biologically determined and they are not fixed in time. Instead our beliefs develop, change and are challenged all the time. Such understandings are learned over time and in different contexts.

Gender Equity in Education Policy (2003)

Gender equity for both females and males is a global issue. Many countries in the world today are addressing this issue through international conventions. The Department of Education (DOE) *Gender Equity in Education Policy* is based upon proceedings at a series of international conventions dating from 1962 through the present day.

The Government of Papua New Guinea has endorsed and subscribed to the recommendations of the following international conventions that address issues of human rights:

- *the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights* (1962)
- *Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women* (1979)
- *the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child* (1989)
- *Education for All* (United Nations Declaration 1990)
- *the Beijing Declaration and the Global Platform for Action* (1995)

These international conventions call for the fair treatment of all human beings, whether female or male, rich or poor, young or old. These and other international conventions that followed, called for the mainstreaming of gender issues. This means that governments and non-government organizations (NGOs) must be conscious of addressing gender issues throughout all aspects of policy and practice, to ensure that females and males are treated fairly.

The *Papua New Guinea Platform for Action* was written as a result of the information coming from these international conventions. The Constitution of Papua New Guinea also supports the implementation of gender equity through its promotion of integral human development. This means that everybody is given an equal opportunity to develop to their full potential.

The *National Education Plans 1995 – 2004* and *2005 – 2014* take this a step further by providing a wide range of approaches to address issues of gender equity in education. For example, a Gender Mainstreaming Policy for the Department of Education will be formulated to ensure that equal opportunities are provided for women and men at all levels of education including the executive level. The *Gender Equity in Education Policy* (2003) was written as an indication that the Department of Education is committed to addressing gender equity.

A series of awareness workshops on the Department's Policy for Gender Equity in Education has been conducted for officers at the CDD since 2002. These workshops were significant as they prepared the officers to understand and accept the new concept. In order for gender inclusive issues to be fully incorporated in the curriculum resources, good gender practice is paramount at the place of work.

Aims of Gender Equity in Education Policy

The Gender Equity in Education policy aims to:

- educate female and male students for a satisfying, responsible and productive life, including work inside and outside the home
- provide a curriculum which, in content, language and methodology meets the educational needs and rights of female students as well as male students.
- acknowledge and respect positive cultural values and individual differences
- provide a curriculum which challenges unfair cultural practices and which recognizes the contribution to society of the full range of women's capabilities as well as the contributions of diverse groups of men
- encourage the development of positive attitudes and behaviours in male and female students which promote social responsibility, empathy, and sensitive, equal and non-violent relationships
- provide a challenging learning environment which is socially and culturally supportive and physically comfortable for female as well as male students
- prepare female students and male students for their rights to personal respect and safety and provide an environment that is safe and free from all forms of harassment and violence

Objectives of the Gender Equity in Education Policy

In preparing male and female students for satisfying, responsible and productive lives the National Education System will:

- develop curricula resources and courses which are gender inclusive in content, language, teaching and assessment methodology
- promote awareness of gender equity issues in all school communities through its curriculum documents, audio-visual materials, courses and assessment procedures
- provide curricula which facilitate challenging learning environments which are socially and culturally appropriate, supportive and physically comfortable for both girls and boys
- develop curricula designed to advocate attitudes and behaviours in the school community which promote social responsibility, empathy, sensitivity and equal and non-violent relationships
- develop pre-service and in-service training in gender equity for teachers, administrators, DOE personnel as well as ancillary staff
- ensure that all of the above objectives are included in curricula, policies and practices at all levels of the education sector

What did CDD intend to achieve regarding gender equity in the Curriculum Reform?

CDD has taken a positive step to mainstreaming gender equity in all curriculum documents and audio-visual materials with both curriculum officers and teachers. Curriculum officers are also advocating good practice in relation to gender within their curriculum materials and are modelling gender inclusive practices in workshops and within the workplace.

What have we done in CDD to date?

Several activities outlined below have been carried out at CDD to support the *Gender Equity in Education Policy*.

- In 2001 a handbook, *Curriculum Writers' Handbook* was produced containing guidelines for gender inclusive curriculum.
- From 2002-2005 workshops have been held annually with particular focus on:
 - i. Developing an understanding of the construction of gender and how it impacts on students' learning
 - ii. Gender inclusive curriculum
 - iii. Familiarisation with the *Gender Equity in Education Policy*(2003) and how it relates to the work of officers in CDD.
- A writing group made up of officers from across each of the CDD units translated the policy into practice by developing a draft implementation strategy for CDD.
 - iv. The draft was written and refined.

- v. Consultation occurred with representatives across CDD units to produce a final document. Changes obtained during the consultation are being incorporated before the document is printed.
- In 2003 the GENIE Network was established and maintained across DoE and projects with outcomes being:
 - vi. regular monthly meetings
 - vii. a teacher resource being produced and distributed to all schools
 - viii. ongoing maintenance of existing members and introduction of new members

What further actions are planned within Curriculum Development Division to support mainstreaming of gender equity across the division?

A number of activities outlined below have been planned to support the process of mainstreaming gender equity within CDD.

- The CDD Gender Equity Implementation Strategy will be printed and copies will be distributed to all CDD staff
- Workshops will be conducted with participants from each of the CDD units to develop a common understanding of, and commitment to, the policy and the implementation strategy
- CDD plans to set up structures to support the implementation strategy such as grievance committees and processes and monitoring procedures
- Gathering data over time will occur about officers' changing perceptions to gender equity and its importance to education
- Explore links with the mainstreaming of HIV/AIDS.

What approaches has Curriculum Development Division used to introduce gender equity within the Division?

Selective approaches were used to introduce gender equity within CDD. These include;

- Officers taking the lead and moving along a slow change process. This type of approach was selected to:
 - a) show respect for cultural difference
 - b) keep everybody interested and engaged in discussions about gender and its relevance to students' learning – seeing that it is relevant and important for both men and women.
- A collaborative approach was used by cooperating with the Department of Education (DOE) Gender Desk, gender advisers from across projects, gender counterparts from Primary Teachers Colleges and CDD officers. This collaborative approach was designed to:
 - a) best utilize gender expertise from the DOE Gender Desk and other projects
 - b) build and maintain gender networks within and across projects connected with DOE
 - c) foster the sharing of resources
 - d) increase the number of gender equity advocates within CDD.

Achievements to date

Gender has been addressed within all curriculum reform resources including:

- the National Curriculum Statement and the National Assessment and Reporting Policy
- all syllabuses and teachers guides
- all teacher resource materials
- all radio and TV programs

Specific teacher resources that have been developed about gender are outlined below:

- a) Gender Equity in Schools – A resource book for teachers (based on work conducted within AusAID education projects)
- b) A teacher resource is currently being developed for Elementary and Primary teachers to help them understand the impact of gender on student’s learning and to help them mainstream gender across the curriculum.

A shift in thinking is becoming evident through officers’ use of gender inclusive language and their awareness of the need to address gender issues throughout curriculum materials. Formal evidence will be gathered in 2005 through the use of survey to support this perception.

Conclusion

Gender equity is a concept which has challenged officers at CDD to address appropriately. It is therefore essential that various approaches were used to introduce *Gender Equity in Education Policy* so that there is an interest to participate in implementing it. It is however pleasing to note that the officers at CDD have taken positive interest to promote gender equity through curriculum development and are beginning to practice it at their work places.

CDD trusts that through its officers, we will work collaboratively with other officers within the Department of Education and other institutions.