

HALLA B. HOLMARSDDOTTIR

12. MAPPING THE DIALECTIC BETWEEN GLOBAL AND LOCAL EDUCATIONAL DISCOURSES ON GENDER EQUALITY AND EQUITY

INTRODUCTION

It may be argued that in 1990 the global campaign on education began with the start of the Education for All (EFA) movement, a result of the World Conference on Education for All in Jomtien, Thailand. This brought about a new era in educational research focusing on issues such as the “world institutionalization of education” (Meyer and Ramirez 2000), “global governance” (Mundy 2006) or more recently the “harmonization of education” (Tröhler 2010).

In the past two or three decades we have been witnessing an ongoing worldwide assimilation of the different national educational systems. This process has been promoted by international organizations such as the World Bank or the International Monetary Fund investing millions of dollars in the school systems of poorer countries on the condition that organizational structures and governance systems that proved to be successful in the rich countries are implemented. The effects of this global governance are quite tangible. (Tröhler 2010, 5)

The result has not only been the way in which educational systems are affected, but also involves how we view various issues within education (Meyer and Ramirez 2000). Linked to the idea of global governance in education Karen Mundy (2006, 24) points out that EFA “has steadily built momentum as a focus for discussion and action within the international community.” As a result, EFA and other global agendas have “become part of a broadly based consensus about ‘what works’ among bilateral and multilateral development agencies.” One of the key issues found within the EFA movement, which has been accepted as part of the global consensus of “what works” is the emphasis on gender within education. This emphasis has, however, mainly focused on the quantitative aspects of gender, namely gender parity. Accordingly, we currently have significant knowledge about the causes and consequences of the low participation rates for girls and young women in education, with much of the research data consisting of evidence collected through large scale quantitative studies focusing on the numbers of girls in school (Colclough et al. 1998; Wiseman 2008). Consequently, a considerable

amount of research has focused on access to education and to some degree on retention (King and Hill 1993; Brock and Cammish 1997; Colclough et al. 1998; Swainson et al. 1998; Bendera 1999; Wiseman 2008; Baker and Wiseman 2009). There have, however, been fewer studies that have taken a more in-depth qualitative approach in examining the local realities of the school environment and the community.

Accordingly, this chapter is an attempt to understand the key issues related to gender and education as part of a larger research project entitled Gender Equality, Education and Poverty (GEEP), funded by the Norwegian Programme for Development, Research and Education (NUFU). The project encompasses critical questions surrounding gender equality, equity, and education within a context of poverty in post-conflict South Africa and Sudan. The understanding is that the social production of gender is inseparable from that of race, sexuality, class, nationality, ability and other categories of difference. The project places feminist concerns within a transnational context, while respecting the need for geographic and historical specificity. Thus, the understanding in the GEEP project is that gender equality in education is a challenging issue in both South Africa and Sudan and as such our focus is on both the similarities and differences in these two contexts. The ways in which gender issues are understood globally and, in particular, in these two contexts depend on how gender, equality and education are defined and how the consequences of this are assessed.

According to the global discourses surrounding gender within education, education is about the school system and as a result the focus has primarily been on counting the number of girls and boys enrolled in different phases of education. However, as Elaine Unterhalter (2005a, 77) argues this is “a descriptive and primarily biological meaning of gender and a very simple understanding of equality as equal numbers.” This criticism suggests that the simplistic focus on numbers has not encouraged us to “understand education much more broadly than schooling.” Furthermore, she points out that our challenge then remains to “look at processes of developing political and cultural understandings and the capacity for action between different socially situated gendered groups in a range of different settings, including, but not only comprising schooling,” the equity issues. In taking up this challenge I will attempt to examine what we know and do not know within the theory domain on gender and education, focusing specifically around the concepts of equality and equity and using South Africa and Sudan as examples of how global policy initiatives are interpreted and acted upon in local contexts; the local context at this juncture will be focused on the policy level. In doing so my concern is to provide a critical analysis of how the global consensus to advance gender equality and equity in education are understood. This will be achieved through a visualizing exercise in which I will map the discourses surrounding the key issues mentioned above. Ultimately, the goal is for this analysis to serve as an exchange of ideas to build upon and thus increase global awareness around the issue of gender within education.

MAPPING—WHY AND HOW

In this chapter, I attempt to respond to Rolland G. Paulston's (2005, 2) impossible challenge which is: "to acknowledge the partiality of one's story (indeed, of all stories) and still tell it with authority and conviction." Overall the chapter focuses on how the global discourses surrounding gender within education can be visualized through Paulston's (1996) mapping method and how these are interpreted and acted upon in local contexts.

According to Rolland G. Paulston and Martin Liebman (1996, 7) "the writing and reading of maps . . . [addresses] questions of location in the social milieu." Thus social cartography illustrates the use of metaphor as a visual way of constructing meaning, a visual dialogue. However, maps are never neutral documents. Since the process of mapping encourages personal interpretation of specific criteria in representing spatial relationships among differing ideas, social cartography relies heavily upon the use of the visual metaphor as an explanatory device to bring about further discussion. Hence, by conducting this mapping exercise it is not my intention to suggest that my views are necessarily shared in the broader social context, but it is simply to visualize the discourses in the field in order to initiate a dialogue between the research group which I am part of and between this group and the larger research community involved in gender-based research. Furthermore, such mapping exercises are a useful device for summarizing and communicating information and it is argued that some individuals may encode information more effectively as images rather than words (Paivio 1986; Clark and Paivio 1991).

In addition to seeing maps as a way of communicating information, we may also see them as a methodological tool. Borrowing from social network theory Val D. Rust (1996) explains how maps consist of nodes (represented by points in the diagram) and ties (represented by lines in the diagram). A node represents the actors and lines represent the ties between actors. Rust (45) argues that "in mapping the intellectual landscape . . . a node is not necessarily a person, but can be either a text or a particular theoretical orientation. Lines represent the kind of interactions or relationships that exist between different texts or theoretical orientations." The nodes in my mapping represent the discourses, located in policy documents, surrounding gender within education, both at the global and local levels with the lines representing the ties between these discourses. In attempting to conceptualize what maps are Anne S. Huff (1996, 163-164) suggests that: "maps can be placed on a continuum . . . and that the relationships ultimately chosen for mapping depend upon the purpose of the map...It is possible, however, to group the purposes of mapping . . . into at least five 'families'." The five "families" suggested by Huff are: maps that assess attention, association and importance of concepts; maps that show dimensions of categories and cognitive taxonomies; maps that show influence, causality and system dynamics; maps that show structure of argument and conclusion; and maps that specify schemas, frames and perceptual codes. Given that there are a range of techniques available within each of these families it is also believed that "in practice map makers often use more than one approach to mapping" (165). Ultimately, my maps fall into Huff's first category as I attempt to assess the attention, association and importance of the concepts equality and equity in terms of gender.

Having discussed the why and how with regard to my mapping exercise I would also like to reflect on the usefulness of maps in what is described by Paulston (1996) as a postmodern exercise. Steven Best and Doug Kellner (n.d.) argue that:

Maps and theories provide orientation, overviews, and show how parts relate to each other and to a larger whole. If something new appears on the horizon, a good map will chart it, including sketches of some future configurations. And while some old maps and authorities are discredited and obsolete, some traditional theories continue to provide guideposts for current thought and action.

Yet we also need new sketches of society and culture, and part of the postmodern adventure is sailing forth into new domains without complete maps, or with maps that are fragmentary and torn. Journeys into the postmodern thus thrust us into new worlds, making us explorers of uncharted, or poorly charted, domains. Our mappings can thus only be provisional, reports back from our explorations that require further investigation, testing, and revision. Yet the brave new worlds of postmodern culture and society are of sufficient interest, importance, and novelty to justify taking chances, leaving the familiar behind, and trying out new ideas and approaches.

Before I journey into the uncharted territory I have discussed above I will first explore the waters of the postmodern world, which I believe will provide me with some direction in trying out my new ideas.

POSTMODERN REFLECTIONS

In the last few decades, postmodernist critiques have increasingly dominated scholarship in the social sciences and humanities. Postmodernism is not easily summarized in a single idea as it has been conceptualized by various theorists in several disciplines. The overall focus of postmodernists is their questioning of “metatheories” (Rorty 1989), “regimes of truth” (Foucault 1980) or avoidance of what Jean-Francois Lyotard (1984) refers to as “grand narratives.” Lyotard questions the attempt of grand narratives to explain everything and in a sense simply argues that no theory is able to explain everything. “These theories, whether in the Marxist or the liberal tradition, are no longer seen as “the truth” but simply as privileged discourses that deny and silence competing, dissident voices” (Connelly et al. 2000, 136). Reflecting on dissident voices Lyotard (1984, xxv) suggests that “postmodern knowledge is not simply a tool of the authorities; it refines our sensitivity to differences and reinforces our ability to tolerate the incommensurable.”

The use of the term postmodern in this chapter as can be seen as a family resemblance (Wittgenstein 1953) or a hybrid (Popkewtiz 2000) of the different literature presented, which have certain epistemological assumptions in analyzing knowledge, change and power. One particular feature of postmodernism is the “linguistic turn” highlighting the interplay of various signs and symbols. The linguistic turn was apparent in Foucault’s (1989) analysis of the past generation, which involved calling into question the control of speakers and writers over their own discourse. In his work Foucault centered his attention on knowledge and

power, demonstrating that power is exercised not by force and instead “through the practices by which knowledge (the rules of reason) structures the field of possible action and inscribes the principles of performance and modes of subjectification” (Popkewitz 2000, 262).

Reflecting on knowledge, language and truth Andrew Uduigwomen (2005) argues that:

Lyotard and Foucault, for instance, reject any attempt to ground reality in one all-encompassing theory or system of thought. . . . Reality or truth thus ceases to be defined in terms of a correspondence to a fixed entity that the descriptions and manipulations provided in our language must perfectly fit. Rather the preponderant view is that reality both conforms to language and is shaped by it. Language, as it were, is the repository of a people’s culture. Culture itself is a complex phenomenon which revels variety. . . . The epistemological and metaphysical implication of this is that truth or reality is neither one nor objective but subjective and many. Lyotard posits that there are many discourses and the rules governing these discourses differ in corresponding proportion to socio-cultural and linguistic variations. Thus, our understanding of reality and interpretation of truth must differ in accordance with and reflect the linguistic and cultural variations.

Thus, it is argued that culture is a field of struggle and as a result language, culture and education should include a plurality of values, voices and intentions. This plurality of voices is seen in postmodernism’s “questioning of totalizing, universalizing theory . . . situated [not only] within a post-imperialist world where colonial ‘others’ have emerged as subjects in their own right” (Lather 1991, 31), but also in postmodern feminist questioning of universalist knowledge.

Hence, postmodern scholarship has also manifested itself in feminist research (Lather 1991) focusing on, for example, women’s lived experiences (Harding 1991). At the heart of postmodern feminism is the sensitivity to the multiple voices of “women” and the recognition of manifold perspectives. For Patti Lather (1991, 21) the “essence of the postmodern argument is that the dualisms which continue to dominate Western thought are inadequate for understanding a world of multiple causes and effects interacting in complex ways.” More recently postmodernism (also poststructuralism) has moved away from the idea of speaking for *all* women. Lather (27) points out that in essence the speaking for *all* women “was disrupted by the political pressures put upon such theorizing by those left out of it—poor and working-class women, women of color, lesbians . . .” This criticism of the production of grand narratives in speaking for *all* women corresponds with the developments over the last 10-15 years in which gender and language have been reconceptualized (e.g., Butler 1990).

The assumption of women as an already constituted, coherent group with identical interests and desires, regardless of class, ethnic, or racial location, or contradictions, implies a notion of gender or sexual difference or even patriarchy that can be applied universally and cross-culturally. (Mohanty 2004, 21)

Accordingly postmodernism coincides with a move from focusing exclusively on women and speaking for *all* women to postcolonial critiques of Western feminism and the tendency to assume that the experiences of Western women are the same for *all* women. Postmodernism has also signalled a move from focusing primarily on women to that of gender.

Gender has come to be seen not as a prior category that affects how people speak, but as a contextualized achievement brought into being in particular contexts. The focus is on how aspects of gender are produced as salient, represented and given meaning and significance within everyday life across various cultural and social settings.

Gender is also seen not so much as an independent category, but rather as intricately embedded in other social divisions: race, class, age, sexuality and so on, all of which are in turn embedded within—and (re-)produced by—structures of power, authority and social inequality. (Swann and Maybin 2008, 23)

The frequently cited claim that gender is socially or discursively constructed finds one of its homes in postmodernism (Butler 1990). However, postmodernism has figured more prominently in its overall questioning of power and authority (Foucault 1980). In attempting to question power and authority in my mapping I place my work within Habermas' (1971) reasoning that there are three categories of human interest that underscore knowledge claims: prediction, understanding, emancipation. Lather (1991, 6) adds a fourth category of deconstruction arguing that each of these "postpositivist 'paradigms' offers a different approach to generating and legitimating knowledge." Accordingly, my mapping exercise is placed both within understanding and deconstruction as the actual map will help to comprehend the dialectic between the global and the local through a deconstruction of how the various texts function (Derrida 1991). Deconstruction is then "a way of thinking . . . about the danger of what is powerful and useful. . . . You deconstructively critique something which is so useful that you cannot speak another way" (Rooney 1989, 135, 151). Moreover, Lather (1991, 13) argues that "deconstruction foregrounds the lack of innocence in any discourse by looking at the textual staging of knowledge, the constitutive effects of our uses of language."

MAPPING THE GLOBAL DISCOURSES ON GENDER EQUALITY AND EQUITY

Recovering the lives of women from the neglect of historians was the goal of women's history from its inception. Its methodology and interests have evolved over time as it has become established as an academic discipline. From its early origins in cataloguing great women in history, in the 1970s it turned to recording ordinary women's expectations, aspirations and status. Then, with the rise of the feminist movement, the emphasis shifted in the 1980s towards exposing the oppression of women and examining how they responded to discrimination and subordination. In more recent times women's history has moved to charting female agency, recognising women's strategies, accommodations and negotiations within a male dominated world.

Although it developed out of the feminist agenda, gender history has somewhat different objectives. Recognising that femininity and masculinity are to some extent social constructs, it investigates how institutions are gendered and how institutions gender individuals. In a short space of time gender has become an indispensable category for historical analysis alongside class and race. (Bailey 2005)

In the quote above Joanne Bailey demonstrates that there is no single agenda or mode of discourse linked to feminist research. Instead the women's movement opened up new questions and strategies for change by expanding and building gender differentiated meanings and positions on a number of issues. Furthermore, postcolonial feminists have more recently brought to light issues of "diversity and difference as central values" suggesting that these should be "acknowledged and respected and not erased in the building of alliances" (Mohanty 2004, 7). The result is a postmodern questioning of totalizing, universalizing theory. At the same time it is also important to consider the argument by Clifford Geertz (1973, 21) that women and gender historians deal with the same "grand realities . . . Power, Change, Faith, Oppression, Work, Passion, Authority, Beauty, Violence, Love, [and] Prestige." The key is to explore how such realities influence and affect women and men in numerous ways in different settings. By conducting this mapping exercise I hope to come closer to achieving this goal while simultaneously acknowledging and respecting the diversity and difference that exists at the local levels. This will be achieved by first mapping the global discourses surrounding gender and education, which do not necessarily take note of diversity and difference, and as mentioned earlier my main focus is on the concepts of equality and equity. This will be followed by another mapping of the local gender and education discourses, at the policy level, in which I will attempt to heed Chandra Mohanty's (2004) call for acknowledgement and respect in the building of alliances within the research group of which I am a part of and between this group and others conducting research on gender and education.

The global discourses surrounding gender and education found in the map below (Figure 12.1) are a result of an analysis of various global governance documents. What my analysis shows is that there are various interpretations of the term equity, but that equality appears to have a much more stable meaning. The mapping below is constructed on the basis of a thorough analysis of the texts and an interpretation made by the mapper, Holmarsdottir. In recognition of intertextuality and what it entails (Allen 2000), the interpretation is based on the mapper's analysis of the texts.

As a starting point in mapping the global discourses I began with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) (United Nations 1948) in which neither equity nor equality are mentioned, instead the term equal is found throughout the document, related to equal rights. The key issue being that of equal access to rights for both men and women.

Although human rights are not necessarily new, particularly within the field of education and development, recent focus suggests a systematic application and increased relevance of human rights standards. Some of the recent literature on human rights suggests that the goal is to "develop poor people's capacities to demand justice" (Tomas 2005, 174). Thus, a rights-based approach with a focus on

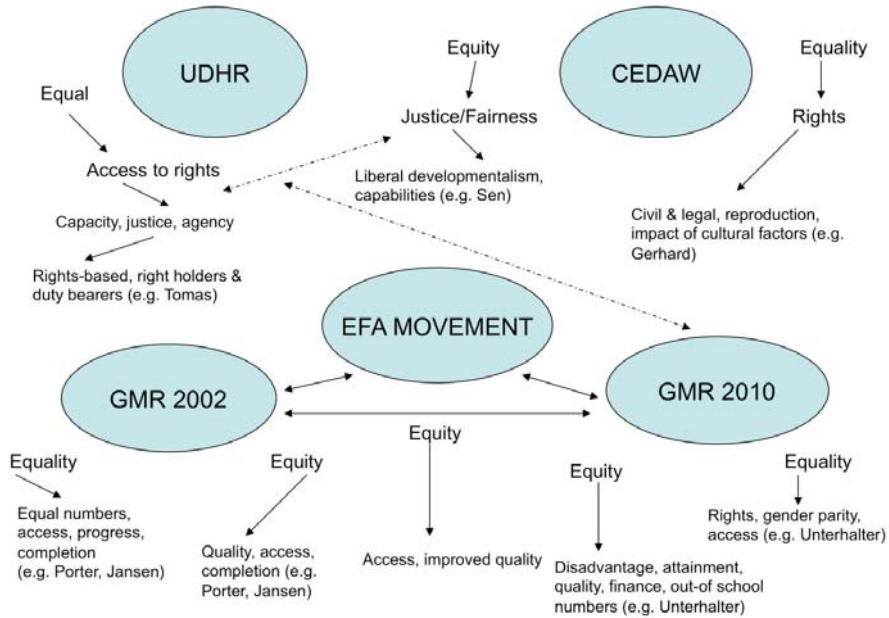


Figure 12.1 Mapping the Global Discourses on Equality and Equity in Gender

equality allows us to see people as active agents. Moreover, Amparo Tomas (2005, 174) argues that “a rights-based approach facilitates the analysis of how justice systems deal with poverty-related inequalities, and thus the extent to which they may be ‘biased’ against the poor.” A rights-based approach basically means to address simultaneously two separate, yet interacting, parties—the right holders and the duty bearers.

In the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) (United Nations 1979) the issue of equity has only one mention in which it is linked to justice. Julio Teehankee (2007) argues that justice is a “contested concept that evokes varied claims to fairness, equality, impartiality and appropriate rewards or punishments.” Furthermore, he argues that there are three liberal conceptions of justice, namely: libertarianism, liberal egalitarianism, and liberal developmentalism. Given constraints of space in this chapter I will focus on the latter as it links with the underlying theoretical foundation of the GEEP project.

It is argued that “liberal developmentalism is a fairly new dimension to the liberal concept of justice that emerged from the writings of Amartya Sen” (Teehankee 2007). Founded on the Aristotelian concept of the “good life,” Sen (1992, 1999) emphasizes that the goal of both justice and poverty reduction should be to expand the *functional* capability people have to enjoy. For Sen (1999, 75) functionings are “valuable beings and doings,” such as being nourished, being confident, or taking part in group decisions. It is also acknowledged that certain capabilities, particularly education, enlarge each other. The word, functionings, is of Aristotelian origin¹ and, like Aristotle, this approach claims that “functionings are constitutive of a person’s being” (73).

In addition to equity mentioned in the CEDAW, the term equality stands as a central theme in the document. Equality here refers to the issue of rights, similar to that found in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. CEDAW argues that the theme of equality found in the 14 articles of the document cover three dimensions: civil rights and legal status of women, human reproduction, and impact of cultural factors on gender relations (United Nations 1979). The main thrust of the document thus appears to be on rights, non-discrimination and participation. Ute Gerhard (2001), however, points out that there appears to be some confusion in the use of the term equality in Western discourse, which comes from its origins.

In Western discourse equality is derived from Aristotle's concept of equality of justice, which has caused conceptual confusion in modern times. According to this rule, only "things that are alike should be treated alike, while things that are unlike should be treated unlike in proportion to their unalikehood." . . . In terms of legal equality between men and women . . . the principle of equality assumes that men and women are different and that they will not become identical as a result of equal treatment, but will be able to preserve their difference. The 1949 Basic Law . . . of the Federal Republic of Germany explicitly guaranteed the legal equality of man and woman, including private law for the first time, and thus invalidating the Aristotelian rule. (Gerhard 2001, 7-8)

Moving from the CEDAW to the EFA movement, I first focus on the World Conference on EFA, which brought about a focus on gender in education, aiming to reduce gender disparity by focusing on women and girls (UNESCO 1990). One of the main goals in the EFA documents (the World Declaration on EFA and the Framework for Action) is to universalize access and to promote equity. My initial analysis of these documents shows that equity involves access to education in order to "achieve and maintain an acceptable level of learning." Moreover, access is also linked to the idea of "improved quality in education . . . [and the removal of] obstacles that hamper active participation" (UNESCO 1990). Looking further into the EFA movement, particularly the global monitoring reports (GMR) published by UNESCO since 2002, I have chosen to focus only on the first report from 2002 and the latest report from 2010 (UNESCO 2002, 2010). My brief analysis of how these reports use the terms equality and equity show an interesting pattern. First the term equality appears to have been much more prominent in the earlier report than equity. On the other hand, in the 2010 report equity appears to have just as much significance as equality/inequality.

Analyzing how these terms have been used and if the way in which they are used has changed from the 2002 to the 2010 GMR a noticeable pattern emerges. In the 2002 GMR equality is linked to the idea of equal numbers in education. Thus equality is associated with access and disparities within education (e.g., progress and completion) whereas equity appears to be looked at in terms of both quality in education, but it is also linked to access and completion. Thus early in the EFA movement the use of the two terms (equality and equity) appears to focus much more on the numbers game. In an article analyzing target setting within EFA Jonathan Jansen (2005) is critical of the numeral focus and our "trust in numbers" (Porter 1995).

I want to suggest that the very practice of measurement has taken on meanings and significance well beyond the specific concerns which it is supposed to illuminate. It is part of being modern, that pretence that we can be precise and exact in measuring our reality; it is part of our faith in measurement technologies, that we can with constant fine-tuning make at least “informed judgments” about performance—the overwhelming problems notwithstanding. It comes from our quest for economy captured in “SMART” targets defined as specific, measurable, attainable, relevant and time-bound. (Jansen 2005, 372)

Driven by our “trust in numbers,” quantification “goes beyond the boundaries of locality and community . . . [that is] quantification is a technology of distance . . . [resulting in a] reliance on numbers and quantitative manipulation [which] minimizes the need for intimate knowledge and personal trust” (Porter 1995, ix). Furthermore, the quality of a quantitative “evidence base, suggests that its appeal has as much to do with our psychological needs as our economic aspirations” (Fielding 1999, 277). In his investigation Theodore Porter (1995) invokes the work of Michael Oakeshott, Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno in order to provide him with a “critical view of modern, positivistic rationalism” (Porter 2001, ix). Thus within the EFA movement it may be argued that it is in the numbers that we trust, and scientific credibility is vested in apparent objectivity, achieved through quantification. As mentioned earlier a questioning of this apparent objectivity and trust in a single universalizing theory is the key objective of postmodernism.

Moving to the 2010 GMR equity has taken on as much importance as equality/inequality. At times in the report the use of the term equity appears problematic as it often lacks a clearer definition. The term is used in relation to several issues: disadvantage (e.g., language, gender, ethnicity, etc.), educational attainment (particularly in terms of gender parity), quality, educational finance and cost-effectiveness, in addition to a decline in out-of-school numbers. Thus despite the increased prominence in the use of term in the recent report equity appears to be more of a catch all term.

Equality, on the other hand, is found less often; instead the term inequality is referred to more often than in the earlier GMR (UNESCO 2002). The use of equality/inequality is much more clearly linked to issues concerning the right to education, gender parity and access. The conclusion is that this term still reflects the focus of the EFA targets and, in particular, a clearer focus on numbers.

In a review of different frameworks used to understand the “nature of the challenge to achieve gender equality in education” Unterhalter (2005b, 15) argues that the women in development (WID) framework linked to the expansion of education for women and girls as well as efficiency and economic growth has concentrated on the simple counting of girls in and out of school clearly found in much of the EFA literature (UNESCO 1990, 2002, 2010). The research utilizing this approach has been mainly led by economists working for IOs, such as the World Bank, UNESCO and UNICEF. Another framework analyzed by Unterhalter (2005b) is the gender and development (GAD) approach, which includes concerns about empowerment. For Unterhalter (23) empowerment is often “called ‘equity’, an approach to

instituting fairness.” Here equity is linked to justice and thus similar to how equity is understood in the CEDAW.

Referring back to the map (see Figure 12.1) surrounding the global discourses on equality and equity we can see that the overriding concern appears to be one of justice and fairness in relation to the UDHR and CEDAW, whereas within the EFA movement there is more of a numbers focus in relation to access, completion, gender parity, et cetera. Despite the fact that equity is also linked to quality in education it still appears that the quality aspect is couched within a quantitative evidence base (Porter 1995). The 2010 GMR is interpreted as linking equality to a rights-based philosophy and therefore moving slightly away from the sole numerical focus in the earlier GMR.

If an overall conclusion can be drawn from the mapping of how the global consensus, the discourses, to advance gender equality and equity in education are understood it is clear that these concepts reflect different aspects in relation to gender and education. The question we are left with is how this global consensus is understood and acted up locally. In pondering this question Joel Samoff and Carol Bidemi (2003, 51) speculate on the behavior of national states in relation to EFA:

Ultimately, notwithstanding what its leaders or educators might say privately, no country wanted to be the lone and lonely nay-sayer, arguing an alternative perspective or different priorities. If the major players were putting their money on basic education, those seeking funds clearly had to do likewise. Not only the broad basic education message but also interpretations and implementation were communicated and given official sanction through the conference process. Education for All was to focus on expanding access, primarily to formal schools. . . . So too were equity and quality issues, though girls’ education achieved some prominence. Critics quickly raised these and other concerns, with an even louder voice in the 2000 conference. The evidence suggests, however, that the original framework has proved quite durable.

MAPPING THE LOCAL DISCOURSES ON GENDER EQUALITY AND EQUITY

In this section I attempt to take into consideration the challenge posed by Mohanty (2004, 7) in which she reminds us of the centrality of “diversity and difference” and that it is imperative that these are “acknowledged and respected and not erased in the building of alliances.” Thus I now focus my analysis on the way gender equality and equity in education is understood within the local contexts of South Africa and Sudan. This will be accomplished through a document analysis of the various educational policies in the two countries focusing on how gender equality and equity are interpreted in these local contexts. As my main goal is to assess how the concepts of equality and equity are understood in relation to gender and education I limit my attention to education policy documents and to documents that focus on gender in general. Given the space constraints in this chapter I will be unable to present how these are acted upon in the local contexts (cf. Holmarsdottir et al. 2011), but instead I will aim my focus on the discourse found within policy documents.

South Africa

Everyone is equal before the law and has the right to equal protection and benefit of the law. Equality includes the full and equal enjoyment of all rights and freedoms. To promote the achievement of equality, legislative and other measures designed to protect or advance persons or categories of persons disadvantaged by unfair discrimination, may be taken. (Republic of South Africa 1996a, Act 108)

The 1996 Constitution of post-apartheid South Africa embraces equality as a basic human right with a particular focus on those who were previously disadvantaged; along with this came the dismantling of the apartheid education system. The goal was to transform the previous apartheid education system into a diversifying one, where a “rainbow” of identities is accepted, and to construct a national identity that acknowledges and respects diversity. Such diversity and difference constitute ideological paradoxes which are often a challenge to implement. Since the first democratic elections in South Africa, legislation has been passed to implement a new school system resulting in a flurry of policy changes in 1994 and 1995, often by policymakers with very limited sensitivity to those in the townships or rural areas. The new Constitution of South Africa included a commitment to democracy, and, since 1996, education policy has aimed to contribute to this new democratic society. However, it must be noted that the dramatic changes in policy have met with both success and failure (Holmarsdottir 2005) and one cannot underestimate the destructive wake of four decades of oppression and division within the society. The inherited legacy of apartheid is thus seen as one in which:

The new government of national unity assumed responsibility for a society systematically fractured across a range of divisions: not only by race, class and gender, but also by ethnicity and language, and between rural and urban dwellers as well as between those with land and the landless. The divisions were a consequence not only of apartheid but also of the exigencies of the struggle against it. (Enslin 2003, 73)

In attempting to analyze how gender equality and gender equity are interpreted in South Africa I limited myself to only a few key documents as post-apartheid South Africa includes an overflow of various legislative policies, focusing on both education and society in general, which I do not have the space to tackle here. Given that the overall aim in this chapter is on gender and education I have chosen to look at three particular education policies: *National Education Policy No. 27 of 1996* (Republic of South Africa 1996b), *South Africa Schools Act No. 84 of 1996* (Republic of South Africa 1996c), and *Higher Education Act No. 101 of 1997* (Republic of South Africa 1997). Furthermore, as an all encompassing policy I chose to briefly look at South Africa’s National Policy Framework for Women’s Empowerment (Office on the Status of Women 2000). These four documents I believe will provide a snapshot of how gender equality and equity are envisioned in post-apartheid South Africa.

MAPPING THE DIALECTIC BETWEEN GLOBAL AND LOCAL

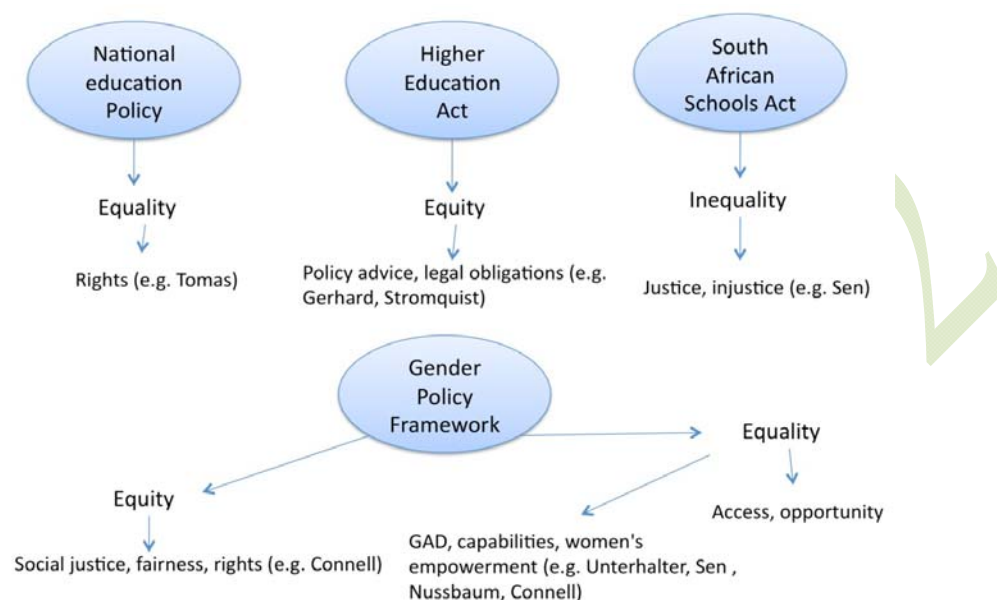


Figure 12.2 Mapping the Local (South African) Discourses on Equality and Equity in Gender

To begin with I focus my initial attention on the *National Education Policy* (Republic of South Africa 1996b, Section 4c), which states the following in relation to equality:

achieving equitable education opportunities and the redress of past inequality in education provision, including the promotion of gender equality and the advancement of the status of women.

This section is the only place in the document where either equality or gender is mentioned. Equity, on the other hand, is completely absent, but there is a linking of the right to education as stated in the Constitution. Thus, as found in the global discourse and in particular the CEDAW, the idea of human rights is evoked and as such equal opportunities within education is seen as a key point in the document. With respect to the link between both the global and local focus on a rights-based approach to education Tomas (2005, 171-172) reminds us that:

approaches to justice reform have traditionally underestimated the complex social processes involved in rule-making and institutional development. This has resulted in an overemphasis on formal institutions. . . . Much justice-related . . . work takes for granted that law and institutions provide opportunity, empowerment and security, through which they promote economic growth. However, laws and institutions cannot provide security and opportunity by themselves; it is the application of those laws and the actual functioning of those institutions that can.

Thus for Tomas it is not a question of the existence of policies or the institutions that are responsible for implementing these policies—in this case educational institutions. Instead it is how these policies and institutions interact with people and “how people perceive, use, change and develop them” (172). This interaction between policy and individuals on the ground will be the next step in the research project discussed in this chapter and will therefore not be taken up at this point.

In addition to the *National Education Policy* (Republic of South Africa 1996b) the *South African Schools Act* (Republic of South Africa 1996c, Preamble) makes only one mention of the word inequality—as opposed to equality—in which a reference to past injustices is made:

the achievement of democracy in South Africa has consigned to history the past system of education which was based on racial inequality and segregation.

Furthermore, as in the *National Education Policy* the *African Schools Act* also makes no mention of equity. Thus it appears that the term equity during the early post-apartheid period was non-existent. Ultimately, it may be argued that early post-apartheid education policies did not take into account or were not influenced by the global agenda surrounding gender and education and in particular the question of equality and to a lesser degree equity. Furthermore, this almost invisible focus on equality, equity and even gender in the early educational policies is also evident in the Higher Education Act (Republic of South Africa 1997, Section 31a) in which the focus on the institutional forum of a public higher education institution is required to “advise the council on issues affecting the institution, including race and gender equity policies.” Again this is the only place in the document that gender and equity are found, while equality is once more completely absent.

Given the limited focus on the issues of gender equality and gender equity in the three education policy documents discussed above it was deemed useful to also consider a more comprehensive policy. As a result of a thorough search of the numerous post-apartheid policy documents, I located South Africa’s National Policy Framework for Women’s Empowerment, often referred to as the Gender Policy Framework (Office on the Status of Women 2000). Given that this document was specifically focused on the issue of women’s empowerment—focusing on not only on education but all sectors of the society—I believed this document would provide me with a broader understanding of if and how the global gender agenda has impacted the South African policy arena.

As this document is comprehensive, covering all sectors of the society, I chose to mainly focus my attention on the executive summary and the areas in which education was the specific focus. In the beginning of the document it is stated that the “Gender Policy Framework [GPF] outlines South Africa’s vision for gender equality and for how it intends to realise this ideal” (Office on the Status of Women 2000, Executive Summary 1.1). The opening section, therefore, clearly points to the main thrust of the document, one in which gender equality is central and where the term equality has been mentioned well over 200 times. What I find unique about this document in comparison to some of the global documents is that

equality is linked not only to issues of access and opportunity, as was the case with the 2002 GMR, but that the term equality also appears to be used much more broadly. For instance, it is linked to some of the frameworks discussed by Unterhalter (2005b), in particular GAD; however the GPF goes further than most of the global policies by linking together GAD and women's empowerment arguing that:

the "women's empowerment" approach tends to focus more on practical needs which in themselves are complementary to the "basic needs" approach reflected in the situational analysis. On the other hand, the "Gender and Development" (GAD) approach focuses on 'strategic needs,' the goal of which is gender equality. Given the high levels of inequalities which pertain in the South African context, the focus on women's empowerment in this document affirms the satisfaction of 'basic needs' ('practical needs') as a necessary precondition towards the identification and attainment of 'strategic needs'. (Office on the Status of Women 2000, Executive Summary 1.3)

In addition to linking together the different frameworks in achieving gender equality (Unterhalter 2005b) the GPF brings in the idea of capabilities (Sen 1999), specifically linked to the concept of equality, arguing that the "expansion of capabilities . . . [is] reflected in the emphasis on access to resources while the key element of the GEM [Gender Empowerment Measure] is the use of these capabilities" (Office on the Status of Women 2000, Executive Summary 1.7). Thus capabilities are seen as a central concern of the GPF, linked to among other things "equality of access to the means of developing basic human capabilities" (Office on the Status of Women 2000, 49). In the GPF capabilities goes hand in hand with equality and the idea of access. The "capabilities approach" (Sen 1999) allows for new ways to measure the quality of life and simultaneously argues against the "still-dominant economic growth paradigm" (Nussbaum 2004, 329) and as such it is seen as questioning the "numbers game." The question that remains is if the understanding of capabilities in the GPF has in reality moved beyond a mere "trust in numbers" (Porter 1995) and simple access and instead attempts to implement deeper changes. The capabilities approach challenges us to "examine real lives in their material and social settings" (Nussbaum 2000, 71), which I am unable to do here given space constraints, but it is something that is required in order to ascertain whether or not the GPF has achieved the deeper changes necessary to achieve real gender equality and equity. Thus, understanding not only what is done but the way in which it is done. However, the document, already in 2000, reflects on these more recent issues, which suggests that the South African GPF was at the forefront in envisioning gender equality in a more comprehensive way than the global documents.

In addition, the document also considers gender equity issues, although equity is not dealt with as exhaustively as equality. However, it appears that equity reflects much of the same understanding as was found in the global documents where it is linked to issues of social justice, fairness and rights. In a recent article by Raewyn Connell (2010, 607) it is argued that feminism in South Africa includes "the most progressive equality guarantees in the world written into the 1996 Constitution; and has struggled to turn this into economic and social reality." Perhaps it might be

concluded that the goal of the GPF was one way in which to achieve this. However, what remains to be considered is whether or not the economic and social changes that South African feminists have strived for and which are reflected in the GPF have actually taken place. Having briefly looked at the South African context I would now like to move my attention to the policies in Sudan.

Southern Sudan

[Southern] Sudanese of school going age over the past 21 years have had no chance whatsoever to attend any school, much less complete their primary education. Many have been fortunate to survive at all, or have been thrown into the business of fighting or sustaining some sort of livelihood at a very early age. Others have had chances to go to school, but school itself has been so unstable and of such low quality that it received low priority. Even when the prospect of attending a school has become a reality, the chances of remaining in school long and consistently has constituted a truly daunting challenge for many schoolchildren. (Sommers 2005, 26)

The work in the GEEP project is embedded in the context described above. The main focus of the project is on the education of the most marginalized Sudanese communities, which mainly include Southern Sudanese, but also nomadic groups in Sudan and other Internally Displaced Peoples (IPDs) in the country (e.g., various group of people currently displace in the Darfur conflict and Southerners living in camps in and around the capital Khartoum). Thus it must be understood that “war, isolation and instability have dominated Southern Sudan since 1955 and the countless events as a result have left Southern Sudanese as one of the most undereducated populations in the world” (15).

The Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA), signed in January 2005, resulted in the establishment of a plural democratic system of governance and ultimately self-determination as a result of the referendum that took place on 9 January 2011 (BBC News 2011). While acknowledging the unity of the Sudanese State the CPA draws out plans for an interim administration for the whole of Sudan with the division of power between different levels of government. This includes a Government of National Unity (GNU) alongside an autonomous Government of Southern Sudan (GOSS), giving the people of Southern Sudan the right to manage their own affairs and to participate equitably in the National Government. Amongst the powers of the Southern Government is the authority over basic education in the South. This requires the development of several education policies for Southern Sudan. In this chapter I focus only on the Southern Sudan since this is where the new policy developments are currently taking place. Given the scenario described above and the tenuous government capacity for policy development, I was only able to locate a few documents that relate to education in Southern Sudan; moreover I was only able to obtain these documents firsthand while conducting fieldwork in Sudan in the latter part of 2008 and 2009.

The first document is the budget sector plan (2010-2012) which does provide some discussion on how and why funds are to be spent (GOSS 2009). The second document which I will focus on is the *Southern Sudan Education Act* (Ministry of

Education, Science and Technology [MOEST] 2008). The final document, which is similar to South Africa’s National Policy Framework for Women’s Empowerment in terms of being a comprehensive document, is the Policy Framework and Action Plan from the Ministry of Gender, Social Welfare and Religious Affairs (MGSW&RA) (MGSW&RA 2009).

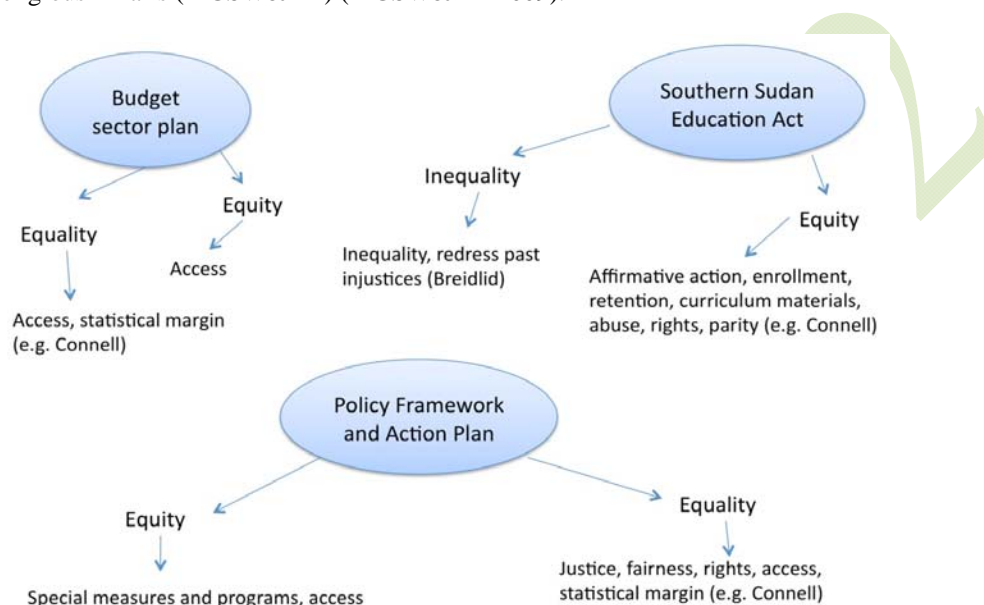


Figure 12.3 Mapping the Local (Southern Sudan) Discourses on Equality and Equity in Gender

The budget sector plan (2010-2012) appears to immediately reflect on the global gender goals and the relevance of these goals in terms of education in Southern Sudan:

While Southern Sudan has achieved remarkable increase in primary school enrolment since the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement . . . the challenge remains enormous. There is an estimated 1.3 million children in schools in Southern Sudan which represents 32% of the school going age. However out of the estimated 1.3 million children who are at school only 36 percent are girls and the great majority of those who remain out of school are equally girls. If Southern Sudan is to make any significant improvement towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) of Universal Primary Education and Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women by 2015, there is need by the Government and the Development Partners to invest heavily in these areas of education. (GOSS 2009, 3)

Thus, initially it appears that gender equality in Southern Sudan is linked to the idea of access and the “statistical margin” of difference between boys and girls and the result is that this ultimately “becomes the meaning of gender” (Connell 2010,

604). The mention of gender equality is otherwise absent in the document as this is the only time it is specifically mentioned. Moreover, the term gender equity is limited to a brief mention in the introduction section as well and it is likewise only linked to the idea of access.

The second document which I have analyzed as part of the local education discourses on gender equality and gender equity is the *Southern Sudan Education Act* (MOEST 2008). In this document there is an understanding of the need to redress past inequality in terms of education in general and with regard to gender more specifically. Thus equality in the document is not solely limited to gender issues, but instead is seen as an overall goal of education. Certainly the “strong feeling of marginalisation and subordination underlines the minority status of the Southerners in the Sudan” (Breidlid 2005, 260), which necessitates the need to redress the inequalities that have existed between the north and the south in terms of education.

While equality is seen as a more general aspect in the *Education Act*, equity is more specifically linked to gender. Furthermore, the term is dealt with more comprehensively in the document than equality. In particular in “Chapter IV: Provision of Education Section 26: Gender Equity in Education” includes ten specific points of focus and embraces issues such as: affirmative action linked specifically to female enrolment and retention, gender responsive curriculum materials, abuse and sexual relationships particularly between teachers and pupils, and pregnancy where female students “shall have the right to remain in school or gain re-entry after delivery” (MOEST 2008, 30). Again despite the reference made to prohibiting abuse and sexual relationships between teachers and pupils and the need for gender sensitive curriculum materials no concrete options are drafted on how this is to be accomplished. Accordingly, the main focus once again seems to be on gender parity where gender policy:

targets women and girls, and includes men and boys only in a shadow sense. Men and boys figure as the statistical norm against which the position of women and girls is measured, or as the perpetrators (in policy about violence or harassment). (Connell 2010, 604)

The final document analyzed as part of the Sudan context is the Policy Framework and Action Plan (MGSW&RA 2009). In the document the minister links equality with that of justice and fairness in terms of the distribution of resources in Southern Sudan. The document also includes a section where both gender equality and gender equity are defined specifically. This is something which has not been found in other documents in Sudan, South Africa or the global documents. These are defined as follows:

- **Gender Equality** refers to several rights, which ascertain to men and women. It is a basic human rights equalization whereby women and men are treated equally.
- **Gender Equity** is a set of policy measures/special programs targeting women with aims of compensating them for the historical and social disparities that deprive them of enjoying access to equal opportunities.

Gender equality in this document therefore is linked specifically to a rights-based philosophy couched in the same understanding as is found in both the UDHR and CEDAW documents. However, when analyzing the document further with a focus of how equality is understood the results show gender equality seen in terms of the statistical margin with a focus on girls' access to education is the key point (Connell 2010). Thus, a rights-based philosophy is linked to access and the numbers game.

On the other hand, the definition of gender equity found in the Policy Framework and Action Plan is centered on affirmative action and specifically targets women in terms of measures to be taken or special programs to make up for past inequalities. However, equity is only found twice in the document suggesting that this concept is less important than equality and our "trust in numbers" (Jansen 2005). One final point that suggests a heavy influence of the global discourses in the development of policy in Southern Sudan is the specific reference to many of the global governance documents:

Ministry's role, performance and effectiveness in implementing the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), the Beijing platform for Action 1995 and the CEDAW (Commission for Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women) for the advancement of gender equality within their specific sector (e.g., Education, Health, Water and Agriculture). (MGSW&RA 2009, 3)

It may be concluded that the government of Southern Sudan might have willingly committed itself to gender equity as a result of the influence of these global discourses and in doing so they have mainly focused on issues of equal access in their policies, while simultaneously they may have been reluctant to take "steps that would transform schools" (Connell 2010, 611) in terms of practice. Certainly the reality of what is taking place in schools in Southern Sudan is the next step that needs to be taken.

CONCLUSION

There seems to be a general consensus that the way to reconciliation, justice and equality at least also passes through education if in the quest for a new South Africa and a new Southern Sudan are to be achieved. Accordingly, Connell (2010, 611) argues that the "dynamics of the state now come into view as part of the story of education." To use the words of Stromquist (1995), perhaps the global gender goals have been involved in "romancing the state" and as a result have sought to influence educational reform through persuading reluctant governments to include gender equality and equity which Connell (2010, 611) argues results in "readily committing to equal access, [but] much less willingly taking steps that would transform schools, and least of all changing gender content of the curriculum." It is this change that needs to be considered in future research to see if the local policy is actually implemented.

What I have attempted to do in this chapter is to shed light upon the dialectic between global and local educational discourses in terms of gender equality and equity. What has come to light is that despite some attempts to view equality and

equity as more than just access and a focus on numbers the reality in terms of policy suggests that governments still rationalize education in terms of a “modern, positivistic rationalism” (Porter 1995, ix) where access and gender parity take precedence over real structural changes needed in order to transform education into a real tool for gender equality and equity. Furthermore, my analysis confirms that “there is no consensus as to the precise difference between these two terms, exactly what they mean, or how they should be used” (Aikman and Unterhalter 2007, 23). The result is an ambiguous understanding of these concepts in relation to gender in education, which can be problematic in achieving the necessary changes in education in order to achieve true functional capability. As Connell (2010, 613) reminds us:

The case for gender justice in education has often been made on the basis of ‘rights’. The global agenda in education can draw on a tradition of international rights statements, from the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, to the Declaration of the Rights of the Child. Yet ultimately, the case has to be an educational one, reflecting ideas of what makes good education. Good education is education that is just; the quality of education is defined by the quality of social life generated by the capacities [capabilities] that education yields.

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NOTE

1. Sen traces the roots of this approach to Aristotle's writings in both *The Nicomachean Ethics* and *Politics*.