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**Cape Town Teachers; Drivers for change?**

**A study of the teachers' role in addressing  
gender-based challenges in classrooms,  
Cape Town, South Africa.**

**OSLOMET**

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Tusen takk!

Oslo, August 2020  
Hilde Storhoug

**«We are a humongous society and we should stick together»**

(Girl learner, Classroom Observation, Lion Primary, gr. 6)



*Protests against femicide and gender-based violence in the wake of the rape and murder of 19-year old Uyinenene Mrwetyana. Cape Town Parliament 05/09/19 (Researcher's Photos)*

## **Abstract**

Despite attempts by the government, non-governmental organizations and various institutions to achieve gender equality in South Africa, major challenges remain. Femicide, rape, abuse, gender-based violence and discrimination towards females are all symptoms of a gender unequal society, but is not a comprehensive list of the reality of gender inequality. Education institutions, with teachers in the front lines, play a crucial role in transforming the attitudes, perceptions and practice of gender, which leads to many of the gender-based challenges.

With a theoretical and conceptual framework of gender as a social construction, socialization and critical pedagogy, this qualitative case study research explores the teachers' role in addressing gender-based challenges, in four primary schools in Cape Town. The teachers' experiences of addressing gender-based challenges in school, as well as the practical and pedagogical obstacles and challenges they face in doing so, lay the foundation for exploring to what extent teachers have capacity and competence to be drivers for change towards gender equality.

The findings illustrate that the gender-based challenges in the classrooms are closely linked to the patterns of different social expectations towards girls and boys. Particularly, the expectations towards boys as fulfilling the "masculine" role has been viewed as an obstacle related to gender-based violence, bullying towards boy learners who do not conform to the stereotypical masculine role, and disrespectful attitudes towards female teachers.

Through dialogue and practical lessons, some teachers engage learners in critical discussions, questioning the stereotypes and expectations towards gender roles. The findings indicate that female teachers to a greater extent address the gender-based challenges than male teachers, and seem to be more dedicated in doing so. By examining the pedagogical approaches applied by some of the teachers, this study argues that classrooms are a location of possibility to challenge and transform the attitudes, perceptions and practice of gender roles which often lead to gender-based challenges.

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## Abbreviations

ADAPT	Agisanang Domestic Abuse Prevention & Training
ANC	African National Congress
CAPS	Curriculum Assessment Policy Statement
CGE	Commission for Gender Equality
DoE	Department of Education
GALA	Gay and Lesbian Memorial in Action
GBV	Gender-based Violence
GEMR	Global Education Monitoring Report
GETT	Gender Equity Task Team
HDR	Human Development Report
LS	Life Skills (subject grade R-6)
LO	Life Orientation (subject grade 7-9)
LGBTQI+	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, Queer, Intersex (+)
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
NCS	National Curriculum Statement
NDP	National Development Plan
POWA	People Opposing Women Abuse
SAHRC	South African Human Rights Commission
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
TEIs	Teacher Education Institutions
UN	United Nations
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
WCED	Western Cape Education Department

# 1. Introduction

Commitments to gender equality and justice has been promoted as a global vision through development goals and targets such as Education for all, the Millennium Development Goals and the latest Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (Vaughn, 2016). SDG 4 encompasses all phases of Education, and the Education 2030 Framework for Action links gender equality to rights of education for all. This includes access to and completion of education, and equal empowerment “*in and through education*” (UNESCO 2018, p. 16).

The latest Human Development Report (HDR) (2019) presented how the progress towards gender equality over the 20<sup>th</sup> century was celebrated at the Beijing Platform for Action during the 1995 Fourth World Conference on Women. The progress was presented as “*remarkable in basic achievements in health and education and participation in markets and politics*” (UNDP, 2019, p. 147). This presents a progress in basic capabilities. However, as they state, the world is still far from achieving gender equality by 2030 (UNDP, 2019). Particularly, challenges of “*enhanced capabilities that alter power relations and enhance agency*” (UNDP, 2019, p. 147) remain.

The commitment to achieving gender equality in South Africa is integrated in their Constitution (Act 39 of 1996). Within the Constitution, the Commission for Gender Equality (CGE) was established as a state institution and constitutional entity to promote gender equality and advise the Parliament on legislations, which affect gender equality and the status of women (Commission for Gender Equality, 2018). In their latest report from 2018, they present some positive progress towards gender equality, while there is still much to be done:

It is, however, disheartening to realise that despite the institutional efforts of the State, Constitutional entities, the National Gender Machinery and concerned citizenry, much still has to be done to change the attitudes, practices and behavior of society at large. (CGE, 2018, p. 9)

This extract underlines the importance of changing the attitudes, practice and behavior in society, in order to achieve gender equality. Educational institutions are viewed as an important secondary socialization arena for the learners and can be viewed as keys towards addressing these attitudes, practice and behavior related to gender inequality in the society

(United Nations Development Program, 2018). Teachers play a crucial role in this work, and hooks'<sup>1</sup> claims that the classroom is a location of possibility:

The classroom, with all its limitations, remains a location of possibility. In that field of possibility we have the opportunity to labor for freedom, to demand of ourselves and our comrades, an openness of mind and heart that allows us to face reality even as we collectively imagine ways to move beyond boundaries, to transgress. (hooks, 1994, p. 207)

Equal Education (2015) argues that there is a major pressure on teachers in South Africa to be in the forefront of promoting values in order to achieve equality in society, including gender equality. At the same time, teachers are overburdened by administrative tasks, which affects the time for teaching. Thus, one might question whether hooks' quote with its claim on "the classroom as a location of possibility" is the reality for teachers in this research. This will be explored throughout this thesis.

South Africa has been able to achieve high levels of *access* to education regardless of gender, ethnicity and socio-economic background. Yet, it is still one of the most unequal countries in the world on several aspects, including gender inequality (UNDP, 2018). The authors of the Global Education Monitoring Report (GEMR) from 2018 argue that the quantitative approach of measuring gender equality and progress in education still conforms to a simplistic view of numerical gender parity as gender equality. This argument is prevalent among several scholars who emphasize that the concept of gender equality is defined and understood differently depending on context. For example, scholars have argued that in some contexts, physical access to education in terms of equal enrolment rates of boys and girls in schools are portrayed as gender equality in education, which obscures the many underlying inequalities (Arnot & Fennell, 2008; Unterhalter, 2008; Baily & Holmarsdottir, 2015). In the South African context, issues such as gender-based discrimination and violence are still pervasive in education systems, and influence the quality of schooling and the experienced reality of gender inequality (UNDP, 2018; Vaughn, 2016, p.185). The Department of Education (DoE) in South Africa promote high political ambitions for transforming the injustices in the country through the education system, which will be further described in chapter 2 (sub-chapter 2.2).

<sup>1</sup> Gloria Watkins, professor, feminist theorist, writer and activist, prefers to be referred to by her pen name, bell hooks (lowercase letters) which she claims shifts the attention from her identity to her ideas. (hooks, 1981)

Despite the ambitious political rhetoric, issues of power between people, including power-structures related to gender still continue to persist (Ekne, 2013; De Lange & Mitchell, 2014; Equal Education, 2015; UNDP, 2018). The South African Human Rights Commission refers to statistics which estimate that 21 per cent of women over the age of 18 have experienced physical violence by a partner, and 6 per cent have experienced sexual violence by a partner (Statistics SA, cited in SAHRC, 2018, p. 3). However, the accuracy of statistics on such sensitive issues are questionable, since many cases of GBV are never reported (SAHRC, 2018). To the extent statistics is able to adequately reflect the rate of femicide, South Africa is ranked fourth in the world, on highest female interpersonal violence death rate (Statistics SA, 2018).

## **1.1 Navigating the field of literature**

Exploring the field of literature of gender and education in South Africa reveals a rich number of studies conducted, and can at times be overwhelming to navigate. Several contributions have underlined how patriarchal value systems are still rooted in the society which is viewed as an obstacle for girls in the education system where factors such as physical and structural violence are still persistent (Holmarsdottir, Ekne & Augestad, 2011; De Lange & Mitchell, 2014; Vaughn, 2016). A significant number of studies also underlines the importance of addressing the traditional, often patriarchal gender norms and roles in the schools (Diko, 2007; Nomlomo, 2013; Augestad, 2013; Ekne, 2013, Vaughn, 2016). Their work underlines how the socially constructed traditional gender roles permeates the education system and might be considered an obstacle in reaching gender equality and empowerment of girls. They argue for the importance of collaborating on transforming the stereotypical perception of gender roles between teachers, parents *and* learners.

An important contribution from several scholars the past 20 years is that gender inequality in schools continue to be the reality, despite attempts to address this by the post-apartheid government, non-governmental organizations and institutions (Unterhalter, 2002; Chisholm, 2005; Diko, 2007; Augestad, 2013; Nomlomo, 2013; Simmonds; 2014; Schoeman, 2015, Vaughn, 2016).

What I found less approached in the literature was to what extent teachers have the competence to address the gender-based challenges, particularly related to traditional, often

patriarchal attitudes, behavior and practice towards gender roles. Recalling how teachers are portrayed as the drivers for change (Equal Education, 2015), I will argue that it is crucial that teachers have the competence and capacity to adequately address gender-based challenges. UNESCO (2015) strongly suggests that Teacher Education Institutions (TEIs) in general need to mainstream gender issues in their programs in order for teachers to develop adequate strategies and attitudes to address issues that most likely will arise in the classrooms. Chisholm (2005) underlined that the political will to address gender inequality through education does not permeate the system. She argued that the recommendations from the GETT report on the need to upgrade teachers' qualifications regarding gender-sensitive pedagogy was not realized. Further, she stated that there is a need to analyze the existing pedagogy, and model alternative teaching methods in South African classrooms, to adequately address gender inequality. Ten years after Chisholm's article was published, similar arguments were made by Schoeman (2015) where she stated that there is a lack of focus on a gender-sensitive approach in South African TEIs, calling for the integration of a "feminist pedagogy" in order to adequately address gender-based challenges in the classrooms. Some of the literature reviewed will be further described in sub-chapter 2.3.

## **1.2 Statement of Problem**

Gender-based challenges such as discrimination and gender-based violence are still the reality in many South African schools. These challenges are often related to the perceptions, attitudes and practice of traditional, often patriarchal gender roles and norms. Teachers have a crucial role in addressing these gender-based challenges in schools, while at the same time they are overburdened with work. Additionally, one might question whether they have the pedagogical competence and capacity in order to deal with the scope of these challenges.

## **1.3 Aim & Objectives**

The aim of this study is to offer a contribution to the existing knowledge on gender-based challenges in South African schools, by exploring how teachers approach the gender-based challenges in classrooms, as reflected in the title of this thesis; *"Cape Town Teachers; Drivers for Change? A study of the teachers' role in addressing gender-based challenges in the classroom"*.

The objectives of my study is to explore gender-based challenges in the classroom, how the teachers address these challenges, and which obstacles and challenges the teachers face when addressing these. The study will also explore how gender roles and expectations regarding masculinity are influencing the challenges at school.

### ***1.3.1 Research Questions***

The research questions that have guided the fieldwork, the analysis and discussion of findings in this study are:

- 1. What are the current gender-based challenges in the case schools?*
- 2. To what extent and in what ways are teachers addressing gender-based challenges in the classrooms?*
- 3. To what extent does addressing gender-based challenges cause pedagogical and practical challenges in teaching and learning?*

In order to answer the research questions I conducted a qualitative case-study in four primary schools in Cape Town from July 2019-September 2019. This included thirteen interviews with teachers and eight classroom observations. Additionally, interviews with representatives from four South African organizations working towards gender equality was conducted in order to add to my knowledge base regarding the situation of gender inequality in the country. A detailed description of the research methodology is found in chapter 3.

## **1.4 The Structure of the Thesis**

This thesis is divided into seven chapters. This first chapter provides an introduction to the field of study by showing the relevance of the research in order to address gender inequalities in the South African context. A brief literature review is presented, where some of the literature reviewed will be further described in chapter 2. Additionally, this section has provided the aim of the research, research objectives and research questions.

*Chapter 2* presents the context and background information of this research with a brief historical view on the segregation policies enforced by the apartheid government, in addition to background information on gender equality in South Africa, with a following section on how gender equality is addressed in education.

*Chapter 3* provides a systematic overview of the research methodology utilized in this study, including sample and access, research methods, dealing with data, ethical considerations, validity and reliability, reflexivity and the limitations and challenges I met during the process.

*Chapter 4* presents the theoretical framework and conceptual clarifications, which are utilized in the analysis and discussion of the findings. The theories are divided in two main sections; Socialization Theory (4.2) and Pedagogical Framework (4.3).

*Chapter 5* presents the findings from interviews with teachers and organizations and observations in the classrooms. This chapter is divided in three sections based on the thematic order of the research questions; 5.1 Gender-Based Challenges, 5.2 Teachers' Approaches to Gender-Based Challenges and 5.3 Practical and Pedagogical Challenges of Addressing Gender-Based Challenges.

*Chapter 6* presents a discussion of the findings within the theoretical framework and background information provided in the previous chapters. Chapter 6 is organized into two sections: 6.1 Gender-based Challenges in the Case schools and 6.2 Pedagogical Approaches to Gender-based Challenges. The decision of combining a discussion of the findings presented in chapter 5.2 and 5.3 in chapter 6.2 was based on the close relation between the teachers' approaches to gender-based challenges and the practical and pedagogical challenges they face in this regard.

*Chapter 7* provides a summary of the main findings and discussion to the research questions. Additionally it describes suggestions for further research based on the knowledge I was able to attain through this research.

## **2. South Africa: Context & Background**

In this chapter I will give some contextual background of the research. The case schools in this research are situated in the midst of townships, informal settlements and deprived neighborhoods in the Cape Town area. Thus, it is important to comprehend the social and economic inequalities within the country, and specifically in this area, in a historical, as well as in a current context.

Selecting parts of this country's immensely rich history posed a great challenge. In order to comprehend the social and economic context for this research, the first sub-chapter will present how a selection of policy enactments during apartheid, especially the group areas act, has impacted the current inequalities, which is useful for the discussion of my findings. Since this thesis aims to explore how gender-based challenges are addressed in the case schools, a sub-chapter on gender equality and the current state of gender equality in South Africa will be presented next. At last an overview of the education system and its overall aims to combat gender inequalities are discussed with particular focus on exploring to what extent gender is included in the national curriculum. Throughout this chapter, I will describe how the background information is linked to the current context of my research.

### **2.1 A Politics of Segregation**

Racial segregation in South Africa is often associated with the apartheid government from 1948 to 1994 (Eriksen, 2016). However, this segregation and oppression by Whites towards Blacks, Coloureds<sup>2</sup> and Asian Indians<sup>3</sup> has deep historical roots. The fight for South Africa by the colonizers Britain and the Netherlands, and the European settlement as such, has heavily influenced the ethnic divisions in the country.

Fights for labor rights, land rights and social justice have characterized the image of South Africa for decades. However, the white rulers managed to use their power to tailor a society

<sup>2</sup> Using the label "Coloured" was a label imposed by the apartheid government, and the use of it is highly contested among people. Additionally, there is a danger of using such labels as it tends to generalize people and cultures. However, I find it necessary to use it in the description of the segregation system, and to show how this system still divides people based on the imposed racial categories. This also goes for the labels "Black" and "Indian".

<sup>3</sup> The Indian people in South Africa are usually descendants of migrants from India. The ethnic group will hereby be referred to as "Indians", aligned with the term used in South Africa.



that continuously worked against these oppositions (Thompson, 2001). The politics of segregation was prolonged in a more extreme and ideologic form by the apartheid government from 1948, which I will describe briefly in the next four sections. Particularly, the Population Registration Act, the Group Areas Act and the segregated education system will be presented since these policies affected the lives of the “Coloured” population, which was the majority population of this research. The fifth section will describe how these policies have influenced the contemporary context of Cape Town.

### ***2.1.1 Apartheid 1948***

In the South African context, apartheid (Dutch for “apartness”) was associated with white superiority and particularly apartness between races (Eriksen, 2016). But apartheid was also a system which was inherently (hetero-)sexist. It controlled sexuality by criminalizing sex between people categorized in different constructed racial groups, and between people of the same sex (Epstein & Morrell, 2012).

After the Nationalist Party won the general elections in 1948, they ensured the implementation of a range of law enactments to further segregate people based on constructed racial categories (Eriksen, 2016). Their political message was clear: this was the only political party in South Africa that could save the country from “*die swart gevvaar*” (The black danger) (Eriksen, 2016, p. 97). This message attracted a large part of the white population, (mainly descendants of British and Dutch people, the Afrikaners), who called for further racial segregation and laws that stated wage- and work privileges for white people, in addition to restrictions of Black Africans’ rights to live in the urban centers.

Four main ideas were the core of the apartheid system. First, South Africans were categorized in four “racial groups”: White, Coloured, Indian and Black. Second, Whites should have absolute control over the state. Third, the interests of Whites should prevail over black interests, meaning that the state was not obliged to provide equal facilities for the “subordinate races”. Fourth, Whites formed a single nation of Afrikaans and English-speaking people, while Black Africans belonged to several nations, which made the white nation the largest in the country (Thompson, 2001). The implications of these ideas have caused major divisions socially, economically and politically between ethnic groups in South Africa. These divisions are still visible in the current context, as I will describe in section 2.1.5.

### ***2.1.2 Constructed Racial Divisions***

The *Population Registration Act (of 1950)*, ensured that everyone was officially registered based on their “racial category”: White, African, Indian and Coloured. (Thompson, 2001).

Placing people into the category of “Coloured” proved challenging as this was an unprecise term for people with mixed heritage (Eriksen, 2016). This category was officially divided into three sub-groups: “Cape coloureds”, “Cape Malaysans” and “Others”. The majority of “Coloureds” live in the province of Western Cape, where they make up for over half of the population (Eriksen, 2016, Statistics South Africa, n.d.). This is also reflected in the population in the case schools.

Eriksen (2016) argues that there has been a tendency of dissolving the categorization of people as Coloured in the past decade, since they no longer define themselves as a group opposing the apartheid government. However, people are still largely defined in these constructed racial groups in the majority of statistics from South African actors.

### ***2.1.3 Forced Removal – Establishing Townships***

As mentioned, the majority of informants in this research belonged to what would be categorized “Coloureds”. In Cape Town, Coloureds suffered particularly from the forced removals under the Group Areas Act by the apartheid government which divided urban areas into zones where members of one specified race alone could live and work (Thompson, 2001; Trotter, 2013). Areas that previously had been occupied by different groups of people were now zoned for exclusive white occupation. The Surplus People Project estimated that 3,548,900 people were relocated between 1960 and 1983 (Thompson, 2001, p. 194).

In the Western Cape, officials decided that the region should become a coloured labor preference area, meaning that employers were required to favor coloured workers over black workers (Fiske & Ladd, 2004). This decision was part of a strategy to remove Black Africans from the region (Trotter, 2013), or at least restricting the growth of the Black African population in this area (Fiske & Ladd, 2004). Within the urban areas of the Western Cape, such as Cape Town, the constructed racial groups Coloureds, Black Africans and Indians

were relocated to racially homogenous group areas (townships) on the periphery of the city, today known as the “Cape Flats”. The majority of white people were to live in the areas surrounding Table Mountain and the coastal areas of the city (Trotter, 2013). These comprehensive forced movements of people were a ground pillar in changing the social geography of the South African cities (Eriksen, 2016), and is still visible today, as I will describe in 2.1.5.

### **2.1.4 Education as a Political Tool for Segregation**

The apartheid government wanted not only to separate people based on color. They also planned that the different racial groups were to develop at a different pace. In this regard, the education system was a ground pillar in securing the status quo (Breidlid, 2013). During apartheid, children and youth were segregated by race and geography. The education system prepared and determined their destinies according to their expected positions in social, economic and political life (Fiske & Ladd, 2004). By bringing education under complete state control, the government managed to use education as a political tool to create further divisions in society in terms of identity-formation among learners (Msila, 2007).

The apartheid government implemented separate education systems for the four constructed racial groups where education for white people was at the top of the hierarchy (Kallaway, 2002). Further, “*The Coloured Person’s Education Act of 1963*” and “*The Indian Education Act of 1965*” were established as separate education systems for Coloured and Indian students (Fiske & Ladd, 2004, p. 43). Although inferior to the education of Whites, education for Coloured- and Indian people was considered “better” than education for black people (Lemon & Battersby, 2010). “The Bantu Education Act (No 47) of 1953” prevented black students from getting an education for positions they were forbidden to have in society (Kallaway, 2002). Additionally, the educational hierarchy was reflected in the funding for the various education systems, the physical infrastructure of the schools, the teacher-learner ratio and the level of education for teachers (Kallaway, 2002).

It is important to note that the apartheid education was not imposed without opposition from the teachers who worked within the system. Soudien (2002) argues that Black and Coloured teachers’ responses to the introduction of apartheid education varied. Several teachers chose to leave the profession in protest, while others argued that their role as teachers in this system

was more crucial now than ever, as they held the responsibility of providing a quality education for the learners (Soudien, 2002). Some teachers did not notice many changes with the introduction of Coloured Education and welcomed the new system, reporting that it was more organized, as well as a positive shift away from the previous missionary education (Soudien, 2002).

Some of the resistance was organized through teachers' unions, while the most significant resistance was disguised and promoted by individual teachers in the everyday black and coloured classrooms (Soudien, 2002). A significant number of teachers chose to apply the formal curriculum critically, by questioning and discussing oppression and categorization of race in the classrooms. Viewing the apartheid system by its official education policies overlooks the complexity of the education system and the experiences within. By the time educational policies and the content of the curriculum reaches the classrooms, it can be significantly different from the intentions of the policies, as well as significantly different depending on the individual teacher and their practice (Soudien, 2002). I will argue that this backdrop also highlights the crucial role teachers have in general in adapting educational policies to the classrooms, also in context of gender-based challenges.

### ***2.1.5 The Settlement and Situation in Cape Town Today***

The social geography of Cape Town, 26 years after apartheid, shows how the policies and laws enacted during this period continue to affect people. Unemployment rates are higher among the "Black" and "Coloured" part of the population (Amtaika, 2010). Economic inequality remains very high (Grinden & Botha, 2013).

The visibility of the forced removals in Cape Town are still visible where the majority of people categorized as Coloured live in the Western Cape region (50% of the population) (Eriksen, 2016; Statistics SA). The dry landscape of the Cape Flats is still characterized by a mix of townships, informal settlements, newer housing structures built by the government and some areas where people of the white middle-class have settled and built new houses. On the other side of Cape Town, the areas designated for Whites during the Group Areas Act are characterized by large villas overlooking the sea, swimming pools, beach bars and spa-hotels. (Field-Diary, Informal Conversations)

For children and youth living in townships, the exposure to community violence is significant (Shields et al., 2008). In the Western Cape, this is linked to the heavy prevalence of gang activities in coloured communities (Ward & Bakhuis, 2010). Children growing up in these areas are in risk of reinforcing violent behavior due to their everyday experience of violence in their communities (Burton, Leoschut & Bonora, 2009; Shields et al., 2008). Additionally, the use of drugs is a prevalent problem in disadvantaged communities (UNODC, 2002), where the drug addiction in coloured communities in Cape Town is no exception (Burton et al., 2009). The violence, drug abuse and high unemployment rates were all prevalent factors in the context of the schools in this research. I will explore further how these factors might impact the gender-based challenges in the presentation and discussion of findings in chapter 5 and 6.

In this section I have attempted to explain the inequalities in Cape Town, by giving a brief historical overview of the segregation policies enacted by the apartheid government. In the next sub-chapter I will give some background and context on the main topic of interest in this research; Gender Equality.

## **2.2 Gender Equality**

In order to comprehend the context of the issues mentioned with reference to by Vaughn in the introduction, gender-based discrimination and gender-based violence, an overview of gender roles and norms in South Africa will be presented in the first section, 2.2.1. Following this, the state of gender equality in South Africa is described in section 2.2.2, with a focus on gender-based violence in 2.2.2.1.

A selection of statistics on gender equality in South Africa will be presented throughout this sub-chapter to give an indication of the state of inequality in the country. However, the underlying focus throughout the thesis will not conform to a quantitative view of gender equality. This is based on the belief that gender equality needs to be comprehended and achieved beyond statistics, through transforming perceptions and attitudes towards gender norms and gender roles. In this sense, Vaughn's (2016) critique of the quantitative focus of global gender goals is important to bear in mind. He argues that the lack of attention towards

patriarchal systems, with prejudices and violence, physical or psychological, towards women can be part of explaining the persisting inequalities. Additionally, a greater focus should lie on the intersection of violence with patriarchy<sup>4</sup>, poverty, and political power struggles (Vaughn, 2016).

### ***2.2.1 Gender Norms and Roles***

Although not unique for the South African context, gender inequality is often linked to patriarchal structures in society where men hold the advantages above women. In order to comprehend the attitudes, perceptions and practices linked to gender inequality today, I will give a brief historical overview of these structures, as a basis for comprehending the expectations and perceptions of gender roles in the schools, presented and discussed in chapter five and six.

A commonality among actors working for gender equality is their focus on the urgent need to change attitudes, perceptions and expectations towards people based on their gender, particularly patriarchal perceptions and stereotypes. This is also reflected in the latest Human Development Report;

Social norms and gender-specific tradeoffs are key barriers to gender equality. Social and cultural norms often foster behaviours that perpetuate inequalities, while power concentrations create imbalances and lead to capture by powerful groups such as dominant, patriarchal elites (Human Development Report, 2019, p. 148).

Social norms are “*operationalized through beliefs, attitudes and practices*” (Akmal & Pritchett, 2019, cited in UNDP, 2019, p. 152). These norms are part of influencing the expectations concerning what is considered socially acceptable for masculine and feminine behavior, and is upheld by social approval and disapproval, which in turn influences individual choices, freedoms and capabilities (UNDP, 2019).

<sup>4</sup> A patriarchal society can be described as a society where males have power over women where males are entitled to a range of privileges which are withheld from women. However, it must be noted that the term is contested and has been criticized for overlooking the agency of females (Ellingsæther, 1999).

<sup>5</sup> Social norms cover the different aspects of an individual’s identity – for example: gender, age, ethnicity, religion, ability – that are heterogenous and multidimensional. (Human Development Report, 2019)

Diana Russell (1938-2020) was a feminist writer and activist. She was born and raised in Cape Town. The last 45 years her research focused on sexual abuse against girls and women. In 1989, a few years before the end of apartheid, she conducted a secret investigation of women's role during the anti-apartheid fight, by interviewing a range of women in South Africa. This resulted in the book "Lives of Courage, Women for a New South Africa". Russell acknowledged her position as a white woman from the upper class in South Africa, while also describing her upbringing as "intensely patriarchal". This book gives insight to a range of factors, which upheld these patriarchal structures, but also explores how women were oppressed in different ways based on their "race" during apartheid.

The interviews reveal several common factors, which oppressed women and upheld the patriarchy; the lack of female representation in politics, also within the ANC, violence towards women, a rape crisis and the intersectional oppression of black and coloured women based on "race", gender and class. Black, coloured, Indian and white women were oppressed on different levels. For example, Coloureds and Indians did not suffer the 'iniquities of having to carry a pass' (Fester, 2000). The number of coloured women employed outplayed the number of Indian women employed. Black African women were, if employed, more likely to be employed as a domestic worker (86 percent of domestic workers were African women), while white women were more likely to be able to work as managers and professionals than any Indian, coloured or black woman were (Fester, 2000).

A common feature for the politically active women interviewed in Russell's project, was the challenge of balancing participation in politics and work, while at the same time managing the household and for several, being a mother, as explained by Coleman, one of the informants;

Although women have as much to contribute as men, certain age-old traditions and family pressures hold them back, so there aren't enough women in the (anti-apartheid) movement. They have a double job, going out to earn money in the daytime and looking after the family at night (Russell, 1989, p. 341)

Although some elements of these traditional gender roles were common regardless of color, it was particularly black and coloured women who were entrenched in these structures. Several of the interviewed women acknowledged that white women also were subjugated to sexist oppression, but in different ways due to their class and race status (Russell, 1989).

According to several of the informants in Russell's book, coloured women had a slightly different position than the other groups of women. Hettie V., an Afrikaner feminist, described them as taking on a range of responsibilities:

Coloured women have traditionally worked, brought up the children, kept the house; in squatter camps, they have often also built the house, worked in the community, sat on the committees, been active in churches, and slaved their guts out to get their children educated. A lot of them are fierce, strong women. (Russell, 1989, p. 285)

Several interviewed coloured women confirmed this. Gertrude Fester expressed how her husband was supportive of her political work *“as long as it didn't take up too much of my time, and as long as the washing was done and everything was nice and clean”* (Russell, 1989, p. 245). During apartheid it was not seldom for coloured women to work. The Western Cape was designated as a “coloured preference area” by the apartheid government, to force Black Africans out of the area. Additionally, the major industries in Cape Town were garment and textile production, which employed many coloured women (Salo, 2003). For men, the labour situation often involved unstable, seasonal jobs at farms or construction work (Russell, 1989). Salo (2003) argues that due to these factors, coloured women in the Western Cape held a relatively powerful economic status within the townships as they contributed to the economic resources or shelter, establishing positive social relations within the communities.

Several informants in Russell's (1989) research described coloured communities as heavily influenced by men involved in gangs. Violence, crime and rape were characterized as additional factors which made these areas unsafe to reside in. Due to the violent behavior of the gangs, neighbors were terrified to help rape victims in fear of their own safety. Sadly, this was mentioned in several informal conversations during my stay in Cape Town, 30 years since this book was published. There have been attempts to describe the cycle of violence among black and coloured men as a cause of oppression during apartheid, considering the struggle of achieving certain standards of masculinity, particularly of being the financial provider (Morrell, 1998). However, Graff and Heineken (2017) warn about the danger of reinforcing such statements as it implies that only black and coloured men were perpetrators of violence.



Several scholars have shown how these historical expectations towards gender roles are still entrenched in the societal perceptions of the responsibilities of women and men (Diko, 2007; Nomlomo, 2013; Augestad, 2013; Sonke Gender Justice, 2019) Russell (1989) described apartheid and sexism as “*so intertwined that fighting one entails fighting the other*” (p. 349). However, she also underlines that they are separable; “*When husbands expect their wives to be subservient to them, and think they have the right to beat them and force sex on them, we are seeing the horrors not of apartheid, but of patriarchy*” (p.349).

Although this section has focused particularly on gender roles during apartheid, it is important to note that these perceptions of gender roles cannot solely be explained by apartheid, but rather longstanding traditions in the division of gender roles. The descriptions of gender roles in a highly diverse South African society with an extremely complex history is a great challenge. However, I have attempted to give a brief background in order to comprehend the gender roles visible in the context of the case schools, as will be presented in the findings.

### ***2.2.2 The State of Gender Equality in South Africa***

In South Africa’s 2030 National Development Plan, gender discrimination is portrayed as a major problem in several social and economic settings such as the workplace, within the family and in educational institutions. A number of statistics and case-studies show high numbers of gender-based violence and gender-based discrimination (Human Development Country Report, 2019, Commission on Gender Equality, 2018, Vaughn, 2016).

At least at a rhetorical level, the national commitment to achieving gender equality can be regarded as progressive. The Constitution declares that “*South Africa belongs to all who live in it and seeks to build a society where opportunity is not defined by race, gender, class or religion*” (Republic of SA, 2012, p. 460). However, as implicated in this statement, addressing the historical segregation and discrimination of people has many faces, in addition to gender. The overarching values of the constitution are human dignity, non-sexism, non-racialism and the rule of law. These are all integrated in educational policies and the national curriculum, as will be presented in the next sub-chapter 2.3.

The National Development Plan calls for sustained campaigns on changing attitudes and behavior for gender equity and against gender-based violence, equal protection for all,

including women, children and LGBTIQ+ people (lesbian, gay, bi-sexual, transgender, inter-sex and queer). A crucial point in the plan is the emphasis on the role educational institutions have in changing people's attitudes, which is aligned with the strategic objectives pointed out by the Commission for Gender Equality; challenging patriarchal perceptions and stereotypes by educating and raising awareness on issues of gender equality (CGE, 2018, p. 17).

The national focus of reaching gender equality, with educational institutions presented as one of the main drivers for this change, points to how education is crucial in addressing the gender-based challenges in the country.

### ***2.2.2.1 Gender-based Violence***

Gender-based violence (GBV) is a persisting challenge in South Africa. South African Human Rights Commission (SAHRC) defines "gender-based violence" as a general term *"used to capture violence that occurs as a result of the normative role expectations associated with each gender, as well as the unequal power relationships between the genders within the context of a specific society"* (SAHRC, 2018, p. 6). SAHRC (2018) further links the high numbers of GBV in the country to patriarchal norms and attitudes, as well as to the violence from the apartheid era;

The violence inherited from the apartheid era still resonates profoundly in today's society, dominated by deeply patriarchal norms and attitudes towards the role of women, which make violence against women and children, especially in rural areas and informal settlements, a way of life and an accepted social phenomenon. (SAHRC, 2018, p. 22)

Women and girls in South Africa are primary targets of GBV, and SAHRC (2018) state that this is largely due to a combination of gender discrimination and low socioeconomic status. Women with fewer resources are less likely to be able to avoid or escape abusive situations, and/or to seek justice (SAHRC, 2018). Further, they argue that high rates of GBV and failures of the criminal justice system to hold perpetrators accountable contribute to the continuous pattern of unequal power relations and patriarchy where gender hierarchies are upheld through *"essentialized notions of gender and physical and/or sexual violence"* (SAHRC, 2018, p. 3).

South Africa has been part of several international and national movements fighting against GBV and femicide (CGE, 2018). The #Totalshutdown movement in 2018 gathered women from all over South Africa to shed light on the unacceptable high numbers of violence towards women, and to call for political action against perpetrators of violence (Sonke Gender Justice, 2019). This resulted in a Gender Summit, called by President Ramaphosa where a National Strategic Plan on Sexual and Gender-Based Violence and Femicide was part of the end result (Sonke Gender Justice, 2019). However, one year after the #Totalshutdown movement, during the fieldwork for this research, new national protests on GBV and femicide were on the rise again.

The rape and murder of Uyinene Mrwetyana, a 19-year old UCT-student who had her life tragically ended by a male employee at her local post office, emerged into a national movement: #AmInext, in August 2019. The murder of Uyinene took place at the same time as 18-year old University of Western Cape-student, Jesse Hess, was murdered, and boxing female champion, Leighandre Jegels, who was shot and killed by her police officer boyfriend (News24, 2019). Thousands of people took to the streets, dressed in black, protesting outside the Parliament of Cape Town to once again call the attention of President Ramaphosa. A memorandum with a list of demands was handed to Ramaphosa when he finally came out to the protesters, agreeing that “Enough is Enough” (Field Diary). The crowd was angry and the messages on the posters clearly showed that there is a massive and necessary call to end the discrimination and violence towards women.

Violence in South African schools has been an issue for years. Vaughn (2016) refers to a study where national surveys found that 22,2% of high school pupils reported being threatened with violence or being victims of assault, robbery and/or sexual assault at their schools in the past year (Burton and Leoschut, 2013). These issues of violence are part of the overarching issue of gender inequality and perceptions of socially acceptable behavior and gender norms. If not questioned, violence continues to exist as socially acceptable. As Iris Young (1990) stated; “*What makes violence a phenomenon of social injustice, and not merely an individual moral wrong, is its systemic character, its existence as a social practice*” (p. 61-62, cited in Vaughn, 2016, p. 189).

## 2.3 Addressing Gender Equality in Education

The South African Schools Act 84 of 1996 was in principle meant to mark the transition towards an education addressing the inequalities and injustices of the segregated education system during apartheid (Equal Education, 2015). Educational reforms and curriculum transformation have been key priorities in the work for equality after the elections in 1994 (Gumede & Biyase, 2016).

Two years after the official end of apartheid, a Gender Equity Task Team (GETT) was established (1996), as an effort to build a comprehensive policy for addressing gender equality in South African education (Chisholm, 2005). GETT provided a range of policy recommendations for the Department of Education, on what the education system needed to adequately address and promote gender equality. These recommendations were particularly related to the curriculum and course content, the responsibility of the government in dealing with gender-based violence and training for school managers, teachers and caretakers (Chisholm, 2005). Additionally, a National Gender Policy Framework was set up in 2002 as one of the key national legislative policies to advance human rights, and particularly achieving gender equality in, and across, all sectors of society, including education (Simmonds, 2014).

Despite ambitious national rhetoric and efforts to combat gender inequality, there is still much work left. In 2005, 7 years after the recommendations made by GETT, Chisholm argued that policies in education with regards to gender remained mainly symbolic, with little procedural or regulatory force. Simmonds' analysis of the latest curriculum revision echoed similar arguments, claiming that the curriculum content is insufficient in promoting gender equality and empowering women (Simmonds, 2014). Additionally, a common point made by Chisholm and Simmonds was the lack of implementing a gender-sensitive training for teachers.

The national rhetoric and commitment to achieve gender equality and protection of women's rights *in and through* education can be seen in several official documents, including the South African Constitution (1996), the South African Schools Act (1996) and the National Curriculum Statement (2012) (Nomlomo, 2013). The next two sections will give a brief

overview of how gender equality is promoted in the National Curriculum Statements (NCS) and the Curriculum Assessment Policy Statements (CAPS), particularly through the subject of Life Skills and Life Orientation, since this is the subject mainly including gender themes in the curriculum.

### ***2.3.1 The National Curriculum Statement on Gender Equality***

The curriculum has undergone several revisions in post-apartheid South Africa to secure the quality of education for all. The overarching basis for educational reforms and curriculum transformation has been the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (Act 106 of 1996) (Gumede & Biyase, 2016).

The 2030 National Development Plan states that the Constitutional values should be fostered through schools in order to create a tolerant and gender-sensitive South Africa, by challenging prejudice and discriminatory practices (Republic of South Africa, 2012, p. 470). The 2002 Schools' Values Manifesto and the Bill of Responsibilities outline the values which should permeate the education system "*democracy, social justice and equity, equality, non-racism and non-sexism, ubuntu, human dignity, an open society, accountability, responsibility, the rule of law, respect and reconciliation*" (Republic of South Africa, 2012 p. 463). Several of these values could be interpreted to concern gender; social justice and equity, equality, non-sexism and respect. However, non-sexism is the only value which specifically addresses gender.

As a result of the latest curriculum revision in 2009, the "National Curriculum Statement (NCS) Grades R-12" and "Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statements (CAPS)" were introduced. The National Curriculum Statement (NCS) "*gives expression to the knowledge, skills and values worth learning in South African schools*" (DoE, 2011, p. 4). This document contains policy statements for learning and teaching and includes a single comprehensive document for each subject: Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statements (CAPS). In sum, the content of CAPS for each subject is developed to be aligned with the overall aim and principles of the NCS (DoE, 2011).

The NCS states that the aim of the curriculum is "*to ensure that children acquire and apply knowledge and skills in ways that are meaningful to their own lives*" (DoE, 2011, p.4).

Further, the NCS is based on seven stated principles where two of the principles can be seen in relation to achieving gender equality through education:

- Social transformation: ensuring that the educational imbalances of the past are redressed, and that equal educational opportunities are provided for all sections of the population;
  - Human rights, inclusivity, environmental and social justice: infusing the principles and practices of social and environmental justice and human rights as defined in the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa. The National Curriculum Statement Grades R-12 is sensitive to issues of diversity such as poverty, *inequality*, race, *gender*, language, age, disability and other factors.
- (DoE, 2011, p. 4)

These statements from the Department of Education suggest high political ambitions for transforming the injustices in the country through the education system. However, I consider the aim and principles of the NCS as quite broad and ambitious. My interpretation is also based on a previously mentioned point, that the education system has several faces of injustice to address in addition to gender, considering the history of segregation and discrimination.

The next section will briefly describe how gender equality is promoted in the subject of Life Skills and Life Orientation, particularly as found in the comprehensive curriculum analysis conducted by Simmonds (2014).

### ***2.3.2 The Gender Approach in Life Skills & Life Orientation***

Simmonds (2014) explored to what extent the national curriculum addresses the promotion of gender equality and empowerment of women through a qualitative curriculum research, focusing on the verbatim, literal and/or surface meaning of the vocabulary and phrases in order to reveal underlying meanings and assumptions (Simmonds, 2014). Particularly, the content of Life Skills and Life Orientation<sup>6</sup>, which are compulsory subjects for all learners

<sup>6</sup> Although seen as one subject, Life Skills and Life Orientation are divided in two levels based on the phase of education where the content taught in Life Skills serves as the foundation for the content to be taught in Life Orientation for the higher grades (Department of Basic Education, 2011). Life Skills is the name of the subject for foundation phase (grade R-3) and intermediate phase (grade 4-6), while Life Orientation is the name of the subject for senior phase (grade 7-9) and Further

from Grade R to Grade 12, was analyzed. This, she argues, was due to how the subject explicitly addresses values such as gender equality, human dignity, inclusivity, diversity and human rights, which are a reflection of the democratic values in the South African Constitution. The description of Life Skills and Life Orientation suggests a value based subject focusing on the holistic development of the learners;

Life Skills deals with the holistic development of the learner throughout childhood. It equips learners with knowledge, skills and values that assist them to achieve their full physical, intellectual, personal, emotional and social potential. The subject encourages learners to acquire and practice life skills that will assist them to become independent and effective in responding to life's challenges and to play an active and responsible role in society. (DoE, 2011, p. 8)

The description of Life Orientation is similar, with the aim to *“equip learners with the knowledge, skills, values and attitudes to make ‘informed, morally responsible and accountable decisions’ so that they can ‘respond to challenges... and play an active and responsible role in the economy and in society’”* (South Africa, 2002b, cited in Simmonds, 2014).

The table below shows an overview of the curriculum<sup>7</sup> content of Life Skills and Life Orientation from grades R-12 related to gender equality and women empowerment in the learning areas, as presented in Simmonds' book.

Education and Training (grade 10-12). Since this research was conducted in primary schools with teachers from grade 1-7, the Life Skills (LS) and Life Orientation (LO) CAPS documents for these grades will be presented.

<sup>7</sup> The American Heritage dictionary (1993) defines curriculum as “the courses of study offered by an educational institution”, while syllabus is defined as “An outline or a summary of the main points of a text, lecture, or course of study”. In this thesis however, curriculum will be applied to the content of the subjects Life Skills/Life Orientation as this is the term used in the literature reviewed, as well as by the informants.

Foci	NCS	CAPS
Personal well-being (personal, community and environmental health)	Grades: 1, 10, 11, 12 Representative examples of curriculum content phrasing: gender inequality, sexual abuse, sexually transmitted infections, sexual intercourse, teenage pregnancy, sexual abuse, rape, sexual harassment, males and females, sexual violence/rape (South Africa 2003, 23, 24&34)	Grades: 3, 9, 10, 11, 12 Representative examples of additional curriculum content phrasing: sexual behaviour, gender imbalances (South Africa 2011d, 28, 2011c, 24)
Social responsibility (democratic values and rights in the Constitution)	Grades: R, 3, 5, 7, 11, 12 Representative examples of curriculum content phrasing: Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) (South Africa 2003, 30)	Grades: 5, 6, 8, 9, 10, 12 Representative examples of additional curriculum content phrasing: Women's Day, prevention of violence against women: law on sexual offences, sources of help for victims: safety for girls and women (South Africa 2011b, 28, 2011c, 23)
Physical development (recreation and physical activities to promote well-being)	Grades: 8, 10, 12 Representative examples of curriculum content phrasing: gender equity, gender biases, gender differences, women into previously men's-only sport (South Africa 2003, 26&35)	Grades: 8, 10, 12 Representative examples of additional curriculum content phrasing: Ideologies, beliefs and worldviews on recreation and physical activity across genders (South Africa 2011d, 27)
Careers and career choices (world of work in terms of further education, career fields and career paths)	Grades: none Representative examples of curriculum content phrasing: none	Grades: R Representative examples of additional curriculum content phrasing: a man or a woman can choose to do any job (South Africa 2011a, 19)
Development of self in society (participation and personal potential of an individual in a society and the world)	Grades: 6, 10, 7, 11, 12 Representative examples of curriculum content phrasing: gender stereotyping, sexism, gender-based abuse, sexuality, gender roles (South Africa 2002b, 31 & 40, 2003, 14)	Grades: R, 5, 6, 7, 8, 10, 11 Representative examples of additional curriculum content phrasing: age and gender, responsibilities of boys and girls in different cultural contexts (South Africa 2011b, 23)

Table 1. Curriculum content on gender equality and women empowerment in the Life Skills and Life Orientation curriculum. (Simmonds, 2014, p. 644)

Simmonds' (2014) findings suggest that content related to gender equality and empowerment of women with the potential to equip learners with relevant knowledge, attitudes and skills to apply in their everyday lives *does* feature to some extent. For example, by emphasizing human rights values such as respect for diversity and difference. However, she argues that the curriculum fails to address these issues adequately, which she explains with three main arguments.



First, the content is dominated by pessimistic and adverse curriculum content, focusing on gender inequality and disempowerment of women; “*gender inequality, sexual abuse, sexually transmitted infections, sexual harassment, rape, unhealthy sexual behavior, gender stereotyping, sexism and gender imbalances*” (Simmonds, 2014, p. 643). This is problematic as it might foster a feeling of apathy, viewing the society as hopeless, rather than creating a sense of hope for change.

Secondly, the content perpetuates a binary perception of gender, describing gender as certain characteristics people are born with, rather than acknowledging diversity and gender as socially constructed. This is visible in the content related to gender-based violence, where women and girls are portrayed as the only victims. This leaves out the issue of violence towards LGBTIQ+ people. An additional problem with this is the danger of viewing women and girls as powerless, when they are portrayed as victims. Simmonds (2014) argues that this might encourage a patriarchal or hierarchical view.

The third argument considers the absence of addressing gender equality in the world of work, where it is only mentioned once in CAPS for grade R; “*Remind learners that a man or a woman can choose to do any job.*” (South Africa 2011a, 19; in Simmonds, 2014, p. 645). This is a clear contrast to the prominence of addressing sociohistorical and socioeconomic discrimination in career fields. in the Bill of Rights (SA Constitution).

In sum, the content related to promoting gender equality and women empowerment *does* reflect the social challenges related to gender inequality to some extent. However, Simmonds (2014) claims that a new gender discourse in the curriculum is required, arguing that there is little evidence of the value of the content which has been reflected as positive. She underlines the need for an inclusive curriculum, with a balanced focus between gender justice *and* gender injustice, in order for the learners to feel a sense of hope which they can use to strive for change. The gender discourse she suggests should entail a curriculum which recognizes the difference between curriculum as gender parity, gender equality and gender equity. Gender parity deals with the quantitative change and opportunities through access for all, regardless of gender (Aikman & Unterhalter, 2005). Gender Equality entails a curriculum which focuses on removing “*obstacles and structures of power and exclusion, such as discriminatory laws, customs, practices and institutional processes, all of which undermine opportunities and outcomes*” (Aikman & Unterhalter, 2005, p. 3). At last, gender equity in the

curriculum emphasizes a fair and just approach, which “*could disrupt dichotomous and homogenous gender perceptions and encourage gender discourses that engage with the complexities of gender justices and gender injustices and thus foster gender awareness*” (Simmonds, 2014, p. 649).

### **2.3.3 A Gender-Sensitive Education for Teachers?**

UNESCO (2015) strongly suggests that Teacher Education Institutions (TEIs) need to mainstream gender issues in their programs in order for teachers to develop adequate strategies and attitudes to address issues that most likely will arise in the classrooms. Further, they underline how teachers acquire attitudes based on gender stereotypes from their own upbringing and cultural background. This is exemplified on a general basis where males are often “*perceived as strong, active, hard and rational, whereas female stereotypes are perceived as weak, passive, soft and emotional*” (UNESCO, 2015, p. 67). Schoeman (2015) advocates similar arguments, calling for the integration of a “feminist pedagogy” in South African TEIs. This is particularly important when considering that teachers are not detached from society, but rather bring their attitudes towards gender into the classrooms.

Based on the GETT report in 2005, there was an explicit recommendation on the need to upgrade teachers’ qualifications regarding gender-sensitive pedagogy, as well as providing an including curriculum for the primary- and secondary education which confronts abuse, violence and sexual violence (Chisholm, 2005).

However, in the South African context, scholars have reported lack of a gender-sensitive focus in the Teacher Education Institutes (Chisholm, 2005; Schoeman, 2015). Chisholm (2005) claimed in her assessment on whether South Africa’s education system had managed to adequately address gender equality that this was one of the main challenges. Regarding the work on gender-sensitive pedagogical processes, she claimed that “*Much more work is needed on both analyzing existing pedagogies and modeling alternative teaching approaches in teacher education institutions*” (2005, p. 10).

## **2.4 Summary**

As pointed out in sub-chapter 2.1. the segregation policies implemented during apartheid are still visible in the social geography of Cape Town today, as well as the economic inequalities.

Deprived communities, similar to those surrounding the schools in this research, are heavily impacted by high unemployment rates, violence, drug abuse and gangster activity.

Gender inequality in South Africa is still a major issue to address, where there is a call for changing the attitudes, perceptions and stereotypes towards gender roles, which is described as the roots of gender-based violence, abuse and discrimination.

Chisholm (2005) reported issues of not addressing gender adequately in the national curriculum, as well as a lack of focus on a gender-sensitive pedagogy in the TEIs. Her statements from 15 years ago continue to be valid in light of the points made by Simmonds (2014) and Schoeman (2015). Simmonds (2014) argued that the curriculum fails to address gender equality and the empowerment of women based on three main arguments; pessimistic and adverse content, perpetuating a binary perception of gender and the lack of attention to addressing gender equality in the world of work. Additionally, Schoeman's (2015) statement regarding the lack of a focus on a gender-sensitive approach in South African TEIs also reflects similar challenges as Chisholm argued in 2005;

(...) to assess gender equality and the curriculum reveal that while there have certainly been major strides since 1994, the process of ensuring gender equality through the curriculum has been partial and that major challenges remain, particularly with regard to pedagogy, learning programmes, assessment practices, teacher education and learning support materials.

(Chisholm, 2005, p. 13)

The combination of these points made by Chisholm (2005), Simmonds (2014) and Schoeman (2015) regarding the lack of a gender-sensitive education in the South African TEIs, as well as the lack of an adequate integration of gender in the national curriculum (as presented in 2.3.2) is important background information for this research.

In the following chapter I will describe the methodological framework for this research, before proceeding with the theoretical framework, findings and discussion in chapters 4, 5 and 6.

## 3. Methodology

### 3.1 Introduction to the Research

In order to answer the research questions stated below, an exploratory case study research in four public primary schools in Cape Town was conducted with qualitative methods as the main approach.

1. *What are the current gender-based challenges in the case schools?*
2. *To what extent and in what ways are teachers addressing gender-based challenges in the classrooms?*
3. *To what extent does addressing gender-based challenges cause pedagogical and practical challenges in teaching and learning?*

The reason for choosing a case study approach to answer these research questions was to seek context dependent knowledge, something Flyvbjerg (2006) underlines as important in all studies of human affairs due to the variation among different cases. The intentional aim of this research was not necessarily to generalize the findings. However, the findings from the four case schools revealed similar patterns when exploring the gender-based challenges and the teachers' role in addressing this. Although the findings cannot be generalized in a quantitative sense, it is reasonable to assume that the findings would not have been completely different if I had chosen four other schools with similar socioeconomic surroundings in Cape Town.

Based on the background information provided, the literature reviewed and the findings from these four case schools, I will suggest that the findings can to a varying extent reflect gender-based challenges in several primary schools in Cape Town, situated in similar socioeconomic surroundings, such as those described in the Cape Flats. This is aligned with Flyvbjerg (2006) who argues that it *is* possible to generalize findings from a few cases. He refers to an 'Information-oriented selection' which can "*maximize the utility of information from small cases and single cases. Cases are selected on the basis of expectations about their information content*" (p. 230). Further, Flyvbjerg argues that selecting cases on this basis is important for clarifying the "*deeper causes behind a given problem and its consequences*" (p.229), rather than describing the symptoms of a given problem by reporting how frequently they occur.

In order to get closer to a holistic picture of the teachers' approaches to gender-based challenges in the classrooms, the research combined several qualitative methods. The choice of qualitative methods will hopefully enable me to provide an in-depth and detailed understanding of the meanings, actions, attitudes and behaviors (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2018, p. 288) among the participants concerning the promotion of gender equality in education. However, I acknowledged that deviations from the planned research design will most likely emerge during the fieldwork. As Hansen (2018, p. 3) argues, fieldwork is seldom "*a logical journey from A to B*". The experiences from this particular fieldwork is aligned with what he points out: "*It was not an unproblematic and linear evolution of data collection. Instead, it was a constant negotiation with contextual insights and interpretations and constant reworking of research strategies*" (ibid. p. 3). Additionally, in danger of stating the obvious, I will underline that although several methodological measures were taken for this research to align with "the perfect research", I had to compromise. Much of the literature on methodology requires several elements which was challenging to attain, such as more time, resources, access to more informants in the field and safety precautions to be able to speak with people in crime infested areas, and the list goes on. The challenges will be mentioned throughout this chapter, in addition to a sub-chapter on 'Limitations and Challenges'.

The aim of this chapter is to present and discuss the research process from the stages of planning, conducting and reflection. Thus, the structure of the chapter will follow the chronological process of the field work. The next sub-chapter will provide an overview of how access to the field was gained and the sample of the research. A discussion and justification of the methods I used during the field work and their purpose for this research is found in sub-chapter 3.3. Following this, sub-chapters on dealing with data (3.4), ethical considerations (3.5), validity and reliability (3.6), reflexivity (3.7) and the limitations and challenges (3.6) of the research will be presented.

## **3.2 Sample & Access**

I chose South Africa as my research site, due to the historical and current state of gender inequality as described in sub-chapter 2.2. The reason for specifically choosing Cape Town in South Africa was mainly due to the contacts I was able to establish before entering the field.

The plan was to include a sample of teachers at schools situated in areas characterized by low socioeconomic conditions, due to the historical deprivation and segregation of the schools in these areas, as well as the gender-based challenges described in the literature I had reviewed before entering the field. This can be characterized as a purposive sampling within a non-probability samples as it plans to target a specific group; teachers, based on their knowledge and experience of addressing gender in classrooms (Cohen et al., 2018). My expectation was that the information given by these teachers would provide me with a deeper insight to the complexity of addressing gender-based challenges in these schools, hence within an ‘Information-oriented sample’ as described earlier (Refer Flyvbjerg, 2006). The several steps to get access to the teachers, will presented in this sub-chapter. Additionally, I interviewed representatives from four South African organizations working with gender related issues, which enriched my understanding of the complexity of these issues. These organizations will be presented in section 3.2.3.

The first step was to identify schools in Cape Town, which I actually started with a snowball sampling in Oslo. Snowball sampling can be useful as a sampling strategy where access to the field can be challenging (Cohen et al., 2018, p. 220). The time limitation was early known as a challenge as the period of research in Cape Town was limited to three months, which is the maximum stay for tourist visa, as well as the approximate timeframe for the master course. I had to rely on getting access to the field quite immediately, in order to collect the necessary data. Getting access to the schools and informants became a challenge throughout the period of planning and conducting the research, partly due to bureaucratic structures and partly due to quite rigid time schedules of the people I intended to get in contact with. Below, I have presented the chronological steps that were followed in order to get access to the schools and organizations and thereby the informants.

<sup>s</sup> Cohen, Manion & Morrison (2018) describes non-probability sampling as “targeting a particular group, in the full knowledge that it does not represent the wider population; it simply represents itself” and “where no attempt to generalize is desired” (p. 217). In this research however, this might be in contrast to what Flyvbjerg (2006) has described as an information-oriented sample, which he argues, *can* be generalized (Described in 3.1 Introduction).

### ***3.2.1 Access to the Case Schools***

This section will provide the steps of accessing the case schools. As this was a time-consuming process I have organized the section in two parts, the period before (April-June 2019) and the period after arriving Cape Town (July-August). The last period is stated until August since I was still negotiating access to some of the schools in the beginning of August. My stay in Cape Town was from July-October, 2019.

#### ***Oslo, April-June 2019***

My access to the field started by briefing relevant key persons at Oslo Metropolitan University (OsloMet) about my area of research. This included my supervisor, seminar leader, previous students and professors with knowledge of the topic and experience from the field of research. This led to a snowball sampling where I obtained contact with relevant people in Cape Town.

The first planned step in order to get access to potential case schools was to identify schools and obtain contact with the principals. My supervisor suggested a contact who was responsible for the exchange program where the students from OsloMet are able to do part of their teaching practice in primary schools in Cape Town. At a meeting in May this contact suggested three primary schools in Cape Town. This contact was my gate keeper to three of the four case schools, where she contacted the principals regarding my research. I followed up by sending an introduction of myself and my research proposal.

Establishing contact with the fourth school was provided by my supervisor as she put me in contact with a principal she knew in Cape Town. The original plan was to access one or two case schools to conduct my research. After conversations with contacts at OsloMet with experience from Cape Town, I became aware that gaining access to the schools could be quite challenging. Therefore, my strategy was to contact all of these four schools, hoping that one or two would provide me the access. After sending my research proposal to these four schools in the beginning of June, I had to await response.

The next step was to apply for a research permission from the Western Cape Education Department (WCED), which was approved before arriving Cape Town (See Appendix E). The approval included several conditions to follow, including a time restriction where the

research was solely granted for doing research during term 3 in the schools (8<sup>th</sup> of July - 20<sup>th</sup> of September). This meant that the research had to end three weeks earlier than planned. The permission was necessary in order to formally and ethically access the public primary schools in Cape Town.

### ***Cape Town, July-August 2019***

Getting access to the schools proved to be a time consuming process. Upon my arrival in Cape Town, I had only received response from one of the contacted principals where she welcomed me to come to the school to do research. However, after several attempts to contact her and the three other principals, the time limitation in Cape Town was increasingly becoming a problem. Eventually I had to seek advice from the people who had provided me with the initial contact information of the principals, in addition to reconsidering the informants for my research. Following this, my first initial contacts at OsloMet sent the principals an email, introducing my research once again, also stating in the email that I had attempted to establish contact with them. I met the principal who was a friend of my supervisor and planned for me to come to his school the week after. My contact responsible for the teacher student exchange program arrived in Cape Town and I was able to join a meeting she had with three of the principals and present my research proposal. Thus, I eventually was able to conduct meetings with each of the four principals two weeks after I arrived in Cape Town.

As mentioned, the initial plan was to include 1-2 schools in the research. However, after the meetings at the three last schools, they all invited me to conduct research the following week. I decided to say yes to the invitation to all four schools. The basis for this decision was twofold. First, in case principals or teachers cancelled or postponed my appointments, I would decrease the vulnerability of losing informants by still having informants from other schools. I had learned through informal conversations that postponing appointments was common “business-culture” in Cape Town and this was consistent with my own experience. Also I had experienced how hard it could be to make an appointment in the first place. Secondly, this would give me the ability to explore the similarities and/or differences of gender-based challenges at four schools that all matched the criterion of the intended case school situated in poor socioeconomic areas. I was aware that if I *did* get access to all the schools, this would give me less time at each school. However, at the time of the decision, I could not know how this would turn out.



### ***3.2.2 The schools***

This section will give a brief contextual picture of the case schools and the communities in which they are situated. The names of the schools are fictive, to ensure anonymization of the informants (see 3.5, Ethical considerations). Key factors presented are linked to the socioeconomic context and certain facts about the schools. All the schools in this research are situated in areas dominated by a “Coloured” population, which was reflected by the sample of teachers and the majority of the learner population. The label “Coloured” will not feature further in the description of the schools as this was a label imposed by the apartheid government.

The schools were categorized according to the national quintile system, implemented by the Department of Education. All public schools are ranged from one to five depending on the socioeconomic conditions of the area. The quintile category decides the amount of funding from the government, where schools in quintile 1-3 are fully funded, while schools in quintile 4-5 are partly funded and depend on school fees paid by the parents (Western Cape Education Department, n.d.). In Western Cape, the primary schools in quintile 1-3 are funded 1010 Rand<sup>9</sup> per learner per year, 505 Rand per learner in quintile 4, and 252 Rand in quintile 5. This system was implemented in 1994 as an attempt to provide quality education for all, regardless of socioeconomic background or ‘race’ (Ogbonnaya & Awuah, 2019). However, one might question the ability of this system to adequately address the quality education gap. To exemplify my point: the lowest annual fee among the four schools in this research is set to 400 Rand at Lion Primary, categorized as a quintile 4 school. This means that they have a total of 905 Rand per learner. In comparison, Rondebosch Boys Preperatory, a primary school situated in a rich socioeconomic area of Cape Town categorized as a quintile 5 school charges 42320 Rand per learner. Only one quintile distinguishes them, but there is a difference of 41667 Rand in total income per learner.

Several of the school principals were skeptical to the census upon which the quintile system was built. This has been acknowledged by the Western Cape Education Department:

<sup>9</sup> 100 South African Rand (ZAR) converts to approximately 6 US Dollars (Or 55 Norwegian Kroner) (13/07/20).

(...) given the circumstances of some schools, their quintile ranking of Quintile 4 and 5, does not work in their favour. For example, the national data that has been used to determine their poverty status does not take into account the demographics of specific schools. There are schools which do not draw their majority enrolments from the local area. Some of these schools then educate significant numbers of children from families which cannot meet the fee arrangements at their children's schools. (WCED, 2013)

Thus, the principals and teachers' view of the socioeconomic conditions are included to add to the perspective, beyond what census numbers can provide. Findings from my own visual observations and informal conversations are also included in the presentation of the schools.

### ***Eland Primary***

Eland Primary School is situated in the *Cape Flats* which is known as the demographic area of Cape Town where the townships were established during Apartheid, under the Group Areas Act of 1950 (Eriksen, 2016). A drive to the school from the city suburbs reveals a large area of informal settlements and townships in the immediate surroundings (Field-Diary). The area houses one of Cape Town's largest gangs, which is confirmed by the principal, the teachers and the Uber-drivers I used during my field work. On every trip to the school, the Uber drivers were concerned I was going to this community. Some of them mentioned that they didn't usually drive to these areas due to the high crime rates. They agreed to drive me there if they could wait to see that I was let into the school (Field-Diary). The school has approximately 930 learners and 40 educators (4 male teachers). The language of instruction at the school is English (Western Cape Education Department).

The school is classified as a quintile five school where parents have to pay school fees of approximately 1900 Rand per year (WCED). However, the principal explained how the school is in an economically tight situation due to the low funding from the government and low fee-income per student. In addition, the school is struggling to rely on the school fees as a large amount of the parents don't pay, only 49% of the school fees were paid last month (Field-Diary, 21/08).

Several of the children attending Eland Primary are from the township and the informal settlements close by. The principal explains that parents want to send their children to Eland Primary to secure their children a better education than in the lower quintile schools. In the

interviews I had with three teachers at the school, they were asked to describe the community surroundings. Gang violence, crime, drug abuse, alcoholism and poverty were common answers. However, the teachers mentioned that the area was split between the “nice part of the community” and the townships and informal settlements (Interviews). The immediate surroundings had quite good housing standards compared to the informal settlements and townships.

### ***Lion Primary***

Lion Primary School is situated in another area of the Cape Flats than Eland Primary. The school is located in short walking distance to a large township and informal settlements. One could see a clear contrast in the housing standards surrounding this school with “shacks” and unfinished concrete structures in comparison to Eland Primary, where the houses in the immediate surroundings were typical middle-class homes with fences around. However, the school is a quintile 4 school and the annual fee was set to 400 Rand (WCED). Similar to Eland Primary, the principal at Lion Primary was very skeptical to the representativity of the census which the quintiles are based on. She said that when they gather data, they only access the nice parts of the neighborhood, which is a harmful bias to the census as it wrongfully decides the quintile category of the school (Informal Conversation). The school has approximately 640 learners and 21 educators (19 female and 2 male). The languages of instruction at the school are English and Afrikaans.

The female principal presented a similar picture of the area as the other schools with challenges of poverty and extreme unemployment levels (80% unemployment rate amongst parents), high crime rates related to gangsterism, drugs and shootings. One of my observations was the large amount of people that were walking around at day time compared to the other communities. This I learned was related to the high unemployment rate in the community. When the teachers at Lion Primary were asked to describe the characteristics of the community surroundings, they mentioned similar traits to the two other schools: gangsterism, drug abuse, violence and crime rates. One of the teachers was an ex-learner of the school and said the situation in the community had worsened over the past years.

### ***Salamander Primary***

Salamander Primary School is in short walking distance from Lion Primary School and the surrounding areas were similarly characterized. The school is in quintile 5, with an annual fee of 600 Rand (WCED). Approximately 800 learners attended the school (WCED) with a teaching staff of about 40 (37 female, 3 male). The languages of instruction are English and Afrikaans.

The male principal had only been at the school for some months. During our first meeting, he was eager to show us all the plans he had for the school. One of his priorities was to secure the safety around the school – repairing the fences and fixing the lighting. He told me about his concern for the children growing up in the nearby township. One of the female learners at the school had recently seen her friend being shot and killed as she was caught in the cross-fire of a gang shooting while playing with her friends (Informal conversation). The teachers described the main characteristics in the area: violence, parental neglect, gangsterism, poverty (especially in the informal settlement), alcoholism and drug abuse. In general they emphasized the lack of safety for the children in the community. One of the teachers explained in the interview how she experienced a culture shock when coming to teach in this school compared to when she was teaching in another province, KwaZulu-Natal. She said that poverty was the main thing she noticed, in addition to the prevalence of bullying at the school (Female Teacher, gr. 3, Salamander P).

### ***Mouse Primary***

Mouse Primary School is the only school not situated in the *Cape Flats* area. However, there is a large township close by, where several of the learners come from. The school is categorized as a quintile four school and the annual fee is set to 450 Rand (WCED). The school has approximately 1350 learners and 40 educators (35 females, 5 males). The languages of instruction at the school are English and Afrikaans. There is a large Afrikaans community in the area, and the school is split between Afrikaans learners and English learners. Two out of three teachers I interviewed applied Afrikaans as the language of instruction.

During my first visit to the school it became clear that the school staff and my gate keeper were very strict regarding our safety to get in and out of the school. Later I learned that two

gangs were housed in the same street as the school, one of them living in the blocks right across the road, facing the school entrance. The teachers at the school said that there had been several shootings in the street, which I also got confirmed by reading the local news. I observed young boys hanging outside these blocks, smoking during school time and hanging out with older boys and men. There was always activity in this street of the community. Similar to my trips to Eland Primary, Uber-drivers always showed concern for my safety.

Aligned with the teachers, the male principal at Mouse Primary told me that they had challenges related to crime, gang violence, drug abuse and shootings. The teachers were concerned about the parental neglect. Additionally, the teachers also described how the family background of the children were divided and that the surroundings were characterized by large social- and economic inequalities. The majority of the learners were from the poor part of the community, while some of the learners were from the more “wealthy” part of the area.

### ***Common aspects of the Schools***

As presented, all the schools were situated in communities affected by gangsterism, crime, safety issues and poverty. Several teachers judged this to be enhancing the gender-based challenges since these community surroundings also involved negative role models for the learners. Thus, these schools are not disparate cases. Rather, they serve as four schools with similar challenges, although the scope and scale of these challenges are not identical. All the schools were situated in areas mainly dominated by ‘Coloureds’. However, the observations revealed that the learners were a mix of “Coloured” and “Black”. Additionally, the learners socioeconomic home backgrounds were a mix. Several learners came from poor socioeconomic backgrounds, while some came from better conditions. This mix of learners reflects the reality of several schools situated in the Cape Flats (Equal Education, 2015).

As noted in 3.1, the findings from the four schools revealed similar patterns of the socioeconomic surroundings and the challenges they face in these contexts. Although I will not generalize this in a quantitative sense, I will argue that the findings from this research may be similar to findings I would have attained from schools situated in similar contexts in the Cape Flats (Refer Flyvbjerg, 2006).

### **3.2.3 Teachers**

The intention was to include 3-5 teachers at each school, preferably with a diversity of backgrounds (gender, ethnicity, culture), with whom I planned to conduct semi-structured interviews.

Before establishing contact with teachers at the schools, I had to get permission from the principal. In the first meeting with the principals, they all proposed to ask the teaching staff whether anyone would like to participate in my research. Later, they invited me to the school in order to conduct interviews and observations with 3-4 teachers that had agreed to participate. The majority of the informants were female teachers, which also reflects the teaching staff in these primary schools. At the four schools, there were 2-5 male teachers out of a total teaching staff of 20-40 teachers. In total, 10 female teachers and 3 male teachers were interviewed. The plan was to include a snowball sampling after meeting the teachers where they could possibly identify other teachers who might be of interest in assisting me in my research (Cohen et al., 2018, p. 220). This did not work out as intended since the teachers were pressured for time and needed the permission from the principal to be able to take time off work to answer my questions.

Cohen et al. (2018, p. 221) claims that snowball sampling can be useful in order to reduce the power relations between researcher and participants as the participants exercise some control over whom to involve in the research. Before entering the field, I was aware that if the gatekeeper turned out to be a headmaster, this gatekeeper might hold a position of power which might affect the informants' decision to participate in the research (Refer Desai & Potter, 2006). One of the principles I had during the first meeting with the principals was the importance of selecting teachers who freely volunteered to participate in the research. However, it became known through informal conversations with some of the teachers that some of the principals had specifically selected the teachers. This might have affected the data as the principals could have selected the teachers whom they knew to be considerate of gender-based issues in classrooms or teachers who were known as 'high-performing'. If this is the case, the selection of teachers might have led to a sampling bias in terms of which teachers the principals identified as possible informants. This might have led to an oversampling of cooperative teachers, which in turn might impact the data I obtained (Refer

Heckathorn, 1997, p.175 in Cohen et al, 2018, p.221). Below is an overview of the teachers interviewed;

	Teacher Informant	Grade	Subjects	Years of Teaching	Education Background	Reference in text
Eland Primary						
1	Female	1	All	9	Bachelor of Education (Foundation Phase)	(Female Teacher, gr. 1, Eland P)
2	Male	6	All, except math	1	Bachelor of sport science Master of sport management Postgraduate degree in Education	(Male Teacher, gr. 6, Eland P)
3	Female	5	Math & Afrikaans	21	Bachelor of Management Bachelor of Education	(Female Teacher, gr. 5, Eland P)
Mouse Primary						
4	Female	5	Life Skills, Afrikaans, English, Natural Science	18	Bachelor of Education	(Female Teacher, gr. 5, Mouse P)
5	Female	2	All	6	Bachelor of Education	(Female Teacher, gr. 2, Mouse P)
6	Male	7	Life Orientation, Math, Technology,	2	Bachelor of Education Currently studying honors degree in educational management	(Male Teacher, gr. 7, Mouse P)
Lion Primary						
7	Female	2	All	1 (previously teacher assistant for 4 years)	Currently studying bachelor of education Early Childhood Development qualification	(Female Teacher, gr. 2, Lion P)
8	Female	4	All	25	Bachelor of Education	(Female Teacher, gr. 4, Lion P)
9	Female	6	All, except English	2	Bachelor of Education	(Female Teacher, gr. 6, Lion P)

10	Male	5	All	23	Postgraduate degree in Education	(Male Teacher, gr. 5, Lion P)
Salamander Primary						
11	Female	7	All, except Math	2	Postgraduate Certificate in Education Previously worked as an immigration consultant	(Female Teacher, gr. 7, Salamander P)
12	Female	6	All	6	Bachelor of Education	(Female Teacher, gr. 6, Salamander P)
13	Female	3	All	16	Bachelor of Education	(Female Teacher, gr. 3, Salamander P)

Table 2. Sample Overview; Teachers

### 3.2.4 Organizations

While I was awaiting response to get access to the case-schools, I started reconsidering the informants for my research. I wanted to extract the most of my time in the field and learn about the topic, which led me to mapping out relevant organizations working on gender-based challenges in South Africa. Although I eventually got access to the teachers, the information and learning process of speaking with the informants in these organizations has been invaluable for my understanding of the complexity of gender-based challenges in South Africa.

In Oslo, I have been active in SAIH (Norwegian Students' and Academics' International Assistance Fund), which collaborates with and gives funding to gender organizations in South Africa. Through my contacts in SAIH, I was able to establish contact with three relevant gender organizations which I will present below. The contact information for the fourth organization was provided by the supervisor of one of my fellow students, who had previously worked with the Department of Education in South Africa through NORAD (Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation). The information provided below is based



on the information from the representatives in the organizations, as well as additional information from pamphlets and the organizations websites.

### ***Sonke Gender Justice***

Sonke Gender Justice was established in 2006 and works towards addressing gender inequality, preventing GBV and HIV. They have a holistic approach with various programs; Children's Rights and Positive Parenting, Community Education and Mobilization and Policy Development. My informant from Sonke Gender Justice worked primarily within the Community Education and Mobilization program, which offers trainings on GBV and HIV, and recruitment of volunteers to engage in building active and empowered local communities.

They also work with a peer education program funded by the Department of Social Development which focuses on training learners in schools to be "peer educators" on GBV and gender inequality. Additionally, they work directly in schools by holding information sessions in Life Orientation on GBV, HIV and sexuality. Sonke Gender Justice describes this work as a strategy to address the gap at these topics in the curriculum, as well as assisting teachers who are not advocating discussions on these topics for various reasons, such as lack of knowledge and time.

### ***ADAPT – Teenz Alliance, ending Sexual Violence in Schools***

*(Agisanang Domestic Abuse Prevention & Training)*

ADAPT is an organization based in Johannesburg, working primarily on enhancing the quality of life of all women and girls, particularly by addressing gender-based violence. ADAPT was founded in 1994 in response to the lack of psychosocial support for female victims of domestic violence.

The interview with the two informants from ADAPT evolved around an education project in collaboration with POWA (*People Opposing Women Abuse*), named "Teenz Alliance; Ending Sexual Violence in Schools". Through this program they work in cooperation with schools where they facilitate classroom workshops addressing GBV, by helping children to unlearn violent behavior, often learned at home. The project intends to make one teacher at each school responsible for following up the project, the schools were not necessarily found to be active with the project. ADAPTs also noted that although several schools have a code of

conduct stating that GBV should be addressed, these statements are vague, without specific strategies.

### ***GALA***

Gala was formed in 1997 to address the erasure and omission of LGBTIQ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex and Queer) stories and experiences from public institutions such as official archives in South Africa. The original aim was to collect and preserve local LGBTIQ narratives, both public and private. They have expanded the activities to create dialogue on sexual orientation and gender identity, educate the public, and to inspire action. GALA is now known as GALA Queer Archives.

GALA's educational initiatives aim to broaden perspectives around these complexities in order to debunk myths and to decrease discrimination and prejudice against gender and sexually diverse persons. GALA works toward addressing these issues by focusing on filling the "gaps" in the archive. The organization prioritizes stories and projects by black queer people in order to address the erasure of these voices that has occurred as a result of the apartheid system in South Africa. Their educational initiatives also focus on intersectional experiences of oppression in order to understand that the discrimination is not experienced in the same way for everyone in the LGBTIQ community, where they encourage participants to broaden perspectives around gender and sexual diversity by understanding how race, class and other factors contribute to oppression. (Information from GALA interview 11/09/19)

### ***Gender Dynamix***

Gender Dynamix (GDX) was established in 2005, as an organization working on trans and gender diverse communities. Their work includes advocacy and research, capacity enhancement, facilitation of community access to direct services and organizational development (Gender Dynamix, n.d.).

Within the education system, they have collaborated with the Western Cape Education Department on holding workshops and trainings for teachers, school management and curriculum developers. In turn, this resulted in the development of a gender identity and expression policy, which deals with identifying and understanding transgender diverse learners, as well as focusing on adapting inclusive learning environments. Additionally, they

provide legal services to learners who are discriminated or excluded based on their gender identity. (Information from GDX Interview, 9/10/19)

### **3.3. Research Methods**

A commonality among case studies in educational research is the use of mixed methods and a variety of data (Cohen et al., 2018, p. 387), which was the selected approach in this research as well. The main data collection methods included semi-structured interviews and observations. This diversity of data can strengthen the credibility, reliability and validity to the case study (Yin, 2009, p.122 cited in Cohen et al., 2018, p. 387, Flyvbjerg, 2006). In this section, I will present and discuss the different methods used to answer the research questions.

#### ***3.3.1 Semi-Structured Interview***

Semi-structured interviews were used as the main method of data collection, since this enabled me to seek answers for all the research questions. The main argument for using the form of semi-structured interviews instead of formal, structured ones, was to ensure that the main areas of the research were covered while still leaving space for important ideas and thoughts from the participants to emerge (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2015). The interview guide that was developed for the semi-structured interviews contained some specific, but open questions in addition to relevant themes and topics. Kvale & Brinkmann (2015) states that the purpose of semi-structured research interviews is to “*understand themes of the lived daily world from the subjects’ own perspectives*” (p. 27). Linking this to the research questions, it will enable an understanding of the teachers’ perceptions of gender-based challenges as well as their experiences of obstacles and challenges of addressing this in classrooms.

The interview guide for teachers was divided into three main sections (see Appendix A). The first part of the interview included some basic information about the teacher, their background and questions regarding the context in which the school was situated. Questions such as what the teachers saw as the main challenges in the area were important in order to get a sense of the relevance of the research questions. The second part of the interview was organized in such a manner that it could create a common ground for which topics the teacher thought was important to speak about related to gender equality and what role the schools played in

promoting this. These questions evolved around the definition and experience of gender equality and what the teachers saw as the main challenges of achieving gender equality. The teachers could speak freely about what they found important, which also to some extent created the basis for the rest of the questions. The final section focused on gender equality in the curriculum and the teaching practice related to this.

Having an interview guide with open questions within certain frames was important in order to downplay the role of the researcher bias of coming in with already set questions of what I thought was important. Interestingly, the answers to some of these questions also changed the focus of the research to some extent as their focus on gender equality evolved a lot around the neglect of boys in the community, gangsterism and lack of positive male role models. I experienced such kind of information as an important advantage in the use of semi-structured interviews.

### ***3.3.2 Observation***

Observation is strong on face validity; it can provide rich contextual information, enable first-hand data to be collected, reveal mundane routines and activities, and can offer an opportunity for documenting those aspects of lifeworlds that are verbal, non-verbal and physical. (Clark et al., 2009, cited in Cohen et al., 2018, p. 542)

In the majority of the observations I took on the role as “participant-as-observer” (Cohen et al., 2018). Here, the researcher is described as a member of the group who reveals her role as an observer. I introduced myself to the learners in each class, stating that I was there to learn how their class was for this particular day. However, the form of observation depended to a great extent on the teacher, where the observations were either a form of participant observation or where I took the role as a more “passive” observer, taking notes while sitting in class. I expressed to the teachers beforehand that they didn’t need to prepare anything special and that I could observe in any class. Also, I told them that they could choose whether they would prefer me to help them as a “teacher assistant” for that class, or if I should take on a more passive role, taking notes of what I observed. The majority of the teachers invited me to take part in some of the discussions they had, and several teachers were happy to have me there as an “assistant” for that class. In two of the classroom-observations, I held the class myself where I took the role as observer-as-participant. For these two classes I came prepared

with topics to discuss on gender equality, where the learners and I would make mind maps in groups and discuss the topics which the learners had put down on their mind maps.

Both forms of observation, the more passive form and the participant observation, had their strengths and weaknesses. In the first form, the passive structure of the observation where the researcher tries not to intervene in the situation, was beneficial in terms of being able to note down as much as possible of the situation. It also made room for a continuous analysis of the situation in the classroom. In the second form, participant observation, it was challenging to take notes during class since I participated actively in class myself, either by engaging in group discussions, helping the teacher as an assistant, or holding the class myself. However, participant observation can be seen as beneficial for the case study as it helps the researcher to absorb the bigger picture, understanding the context by becoming a part of it, and to understand the complexity of how teachers seek to address gender-based challenges in classrooms (DeWalt & DeWalt, 2011). This was aligned with my experience of conducting participant observation. For example, when I helped the teacher as an assistant, I was able to interact directly with the learners in class and got close to a sense of how it is to be a teacher in these classes. Also, I found this form of observation as more favorable than the former as it allowed me to give back to the teacher in terms of assisting them with the workload and time pressure.

The observations were planned within a semi-structured framework. Themes and topics which emerged from the interviews and research questions were points of observation. However, I was open to other observations that might emerge beyond this (Cohen et al., 2018, p. 543). The observation form was divided into four key categories: physical environment, social environment, social and informal interactions and pedagogical activities (See Appendix C).

The observations conducted in the classrooms were beneficial in terms of gaining insight regarding the everyday practice of promoting gender equality in classrooms. It also contributed to answering the research questions 2 and 3 from a different perspective than the interviews in the sense that the observations provided contextual information of the teaching practice.

Another strength of using observation as a method was the ability to compare the observations of how the teachers actually addressed gender in classrooms, to the information they had

given me in the interviews (Robson, 2002, p.310 cited in Cohen et al., 2018, p.542). In addition, this method might possibly reveal other aspects of promoting gender equality beyond the interviews, such as everyday behavior that might be taken for granted or other aspects that tend to go unnoticed. Thus, the observation will be a means to triangulating between the data collection methods. The triangulation of data and methods will serve as purposeful in order to minimize the weaknesses of each of the methods, in addition to “checking” the reliability of the data from the different methods (Lincoln and Guba, 1985, p.315 in Cohen et al., 2018, p. 267). The original plan was to conduct an observation with every teacher that had participated in an interview. However, due to time restrictions, assessments and spontaneous events that emerged, this turned out to be unfeasible. In total, the observations were conducted in eight different classrooms, where some of the teachers invited me to several observations in the same classroom.

### **3.4 Dealing with Data**

The various amount of data collected during the fieldwork required me to have a structure to manage this when dealing with the data during and after the research. During the time of fieldwork, I always carried two notebooks: one for general notes from the field such as meetings, formal and informal observations, information about the informants, and about the schools, and one field diary.

The field diary was used as a tool to help me organize my thoughts, feelings and ideas, in addition to contain descriptive details of what I saw and heard in the field and details from informal conversations I had. In general, the field diary contains quite detailed daily reports where I have written about the day in the field. However, as Hansen (2018) proposes, ethical precaution should be taken in carrying such notes as there is always the possibility of these books being lost somehow. Therefore, the names of people and schools have not been identified in these notebooks. I chose to write in my mother tongue to minimize the chance of people being able to read it.

After finishing the fieldwork, these notes have been crucial in recalling details surrounding interviews, formal and informal observations, and other events that happened at the schools. In this field diary, I also constantly reflected upon the research, wrote down suggestions for

theories, drew mindmaps or recalled patterns I reflected upon during the interviews, or simply wrote down why I chose to do a particular thing, or why I didn't. The aim of keeping this personal research diary was twofold: 1) to recall these details that might "drown" in the amount of data gathered during the months of field work, and 2) to be able to give a more descriptive and authentic presentation of different aspects of the field work in the thesis. This field diary will occasionally be used and referred to in this thesis.

When it came to dealing with the data from the interviews, it was beneficial to have recordings of all the interviews. These were transcribed throughout the period of fieldwork and after arriving back from South Africa. The transcribed interviews were sent individually to every informant asking to get feedback on whether they felt that the transcription was a proper representation of what they had shared in the interview.

The transcribed interviews have been color coded and analyzed in terms of topics and categories by using open-, analytical- and axial coding. First, open coding is simply breaking down the data by attaching new labels to describe and categorize the text (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, in Cohen et al., 2018). This was applied by deciding the themes and categories based on what the informants emphasized as most important with regards to gender-based issues. The color coding enabled an overview of which themes were continuously mentioned in interviews. Secondly, an analytical coding was applied by giving more interpretive and analytical codes to the themes and categories from the interviews and observations (Cohen et al., 2018). For example, the descriptive code could start out as "Teachers' approaches to gender in classrooms", while the analytic code turned out "Challenging underlying gender norms". These analytic codes also derived while reading and deciding theories for the research. Finally, axial coding was used to the group of open and analytic codes by recombining these categories in new ways. For example, several teachers explained how perceptions of traditional gender roles among learners was one the main challenge of addressing gender in the classrooms. This was then recombined to both be integrated as a challenge for teachers, as well as being a prominent gender-based challenge for the learners.

The data obtained from interviews and observations were compared and checked for derivations. For example, I could easily map out any opposing perspectives by gathering the data in themes and categories. If the majority of teachers explained how traditional gender roles were still visible among the learners in terms of behavior and attitudes, these statements

were categorized within this theme, followed by a section where I included the opposing statements from teachers who didn't think that the learners adhered to traditional gender roles. This way I made a structured overview of the data from the interviews, which is beneficial for selecting suitable theories.

### **3.5 Ethical considerations**

One of the aspects I have been continuously aware of, is that each stage of the research would raise ethical issues. Ethics can be defined as “*a matter of principled sensitivity to the rights of others*” (Cavan, 1977, p.810 cited in Cohen et al., 2018, p.112). Considering ethics when planning fieldwork and writing a thesis based on interactions with human beings and their lived reality and experiences, raises a range of issues and therefore this sub-chapter is not a complete list, but presents a selection of the considerations I have taken into account.

#### ***3.5.1 Research Collaborators / Access and Gatekeepers***

The accessibility to the schools was a major factor for choosing these schools.

Before I entered the field, I was aware that if my gatekeeper turned out to be a principal, this gatekeeper might hold a position of power which might affect the informants' decision to participate in the research (Desai & Potter, 2006). These are issues I was aware of, but as discussed in section 3.2.1 on getting access to the teachers, this was something I found out of my hands to control.

My access to three of the schools was, as described in 3.2.1, gained through my contact at OsloMet. She had a long-standing professional relationship to the principals at these schools. Although it was up to the principals and teachers to participate in my research, I am unsure on whether they accepted me due to my relationship to this contact at OsloMet. This was also a similar ethical issue when contacting the organizations in relation to SAIH, particularly since these organizations are funded by SAIH. However, I worked out from the contacts I had access to at the time, hoping that I didn't “intrude” anybody's work or personal space. I sought to negotiate access in a proper manner by sending them a proper description of the research project stating the purpose and conditions of the study, including the research permit from the Department of Education.



### ***3.5.2 Informed Consent & Anonymity***

In order to secure the informants' autonomy, right to freedom and self-determination (Cohen et al., 2018, p.122), I obtained informed consent from them before conducting research. Through the informed consent I gave the informants comprehensive information about the aims of the research. Also, the privacy, confidentiality and anonymity of the participants was protected throughout the research, which the informants were made aware of through the informed consent. These ethical considerations are the basics in the principle of "do no harm" (Cohen et al., 2018), which I followed throughout my research. The only exception of anonymity was with regards to the name of the organizations. The informants are anonymous, but the organizations' name are not, which was a decision made in agreement with the organizations.

The *privacy* of the informants was protected in terms of making them aware that they had the right to decide what they wanted to share. It was important that the informants voluntarily agreed to take part in my research and that they were aware that they could choose not to answer questions or to withdraw from the research at any point. Another precaution in order to protect the privacy of the informants was to save the confidential data material on password-protected units and deleting the recordings shortly after they were transferred to my computer.

The *anonymity* during the fieldwork included not writing down real names of people or schools in any documents. Further, the real names of the informants and schools will not occur during any stage of the thesis as the names have been switched to fictive names. Only the informants themselves will know when they read their own statements or experiences in the thesis as they have received the transcription of the interview.

The informants were made aware that *confidentiality* was an important principle before they were interviewed or observed. Confidentiality is about ensuring that the information given by informants is not misused or disclosed in a way that might identify that individual (Cohen et al., 2018). However, some of the informants had to double-check during the interview, that it was confidential, particularly before they revealed information about issues of the school, teaching staff, school management or the Department of Education. This also underlines the importance of confidentiality and anonymity throughout the research process in terms of what

information the informants are willing to share. The principal and a few key staff knew which teachers participated, however they did not have access to the data from the interviews or observations, nor did I reveal anything that was said during the interviews.

### ***3.5.3 Sensitive topics***

I was aware that my research topic might be sensitive for some informants to speak about, depending on their background and personal experience of gender-based issues. As Cohen et al. (2018) points out, sensitive research can derive from many sources, including sensitive content and emotionally charged areas of study, such as sex and sexual abuse. In a country where statistics of gender-based violence and discrimination are high, I could not be sure that the informants had not experienced this themselves.

Therefore, it was important to be conscious about the ‘situated ethics’, the importance of researchers deciding how to behave ethically in each specific situation (Cohen et al., 2018, p.121). Although it can be difficult to decide how to behave in a certain situation, I decided to let the informants speak freely about the matters, but I also tried to be aware of signs of the informant seemed being uncomfortable with the situation. The interview guide contained open rather than closed questions, which conforms with Sudman and Bradburn’s (1982) considerations when asking about sensitive issues (in Cohen et al., 2018). Further, I made the informants aware that they also could speak with me without the recorder on, if that turned out to be an issue.

### ***3.5.4 Reciprocity***

I owe the informants who participated in this research endless gratefulness, and to give back to the same extent is a challenge in itself. However, I have agreed to send each of them the finished thesis. A minor note on giving back to the teachers, was to offer my help in the classrooms during the observations. This was mainly to ensure that they didn’t think of it as a “burden” that I participated in their class, and that I could possibly help them a little with their workload that hour.

The Western Cape Education Department and the principals at the schools stated that the thesis might contribute to how they can continue their work on gender-based challenges.

they would be grateful for recommendations for how to continue their work on gender-based challenges based on what I found in my research. The majority of the organizations expressed that they did not have time or funding to conduct this type of research on a daily basis and expressed that they would be grateful for reading the thesis as additional knowledge for their work in schools.

### **3.6 Validity & Reliability**

Conducting qualitative research requires attention to the validity and reliability in all stages of the research in order to maximize the quality of the research. Although “*threats to validity and reliability can never be erased completely*” (Cohen et al., 2018, p. 245), this sub-chapter will describe which precautions were taken to minimize these threats, and to maximize the validity and reliability.

Validity can be described as the degree to which a method investigates what it is intended to investigate and the sound interpretation of the results of the data collection (Ary et al., 2001 cited in Cohen et al., 2018). In qualitative research, the principles of validity include context-boundedness and ‘thick descriptions’ of the area of research, ensuring that data are socially situated, and socially and culturally saturated, involving hermeneutics to understand others’ understanding of the world, descriptive data, concern for process over outcome and respondent validation. Hammersley & Atkinson (1983) describe validity in qualitative research as concerning the “*meanings that subjects give to data and inferences drawn from the data*” (cited in Cohen et al., 2018, p. 247). This has been an important principle throughout the research.

Reliability is described as an umbrella term for “*dependability, consistency and replicability over time, over instruments and over groups of respondents*” (Cohen et al., 2018, p. 268). In order to ensure reliability, one must demonstrate that similar results would be found if it were to be carried out on a similar group of informants in a similar context. Ensuring reliability in qualitative research is contested for being a concept for positivist or quantitative research, and therefore Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggest that terms such as ‘trustworthiness’ be used. Reliability might depend on the “*fit between what researchers record as data and what actually occurs in the natural setting that is being researched (...)*” (Bogdan and Biklen,

1992, p. 48 cited in Cohen et al., 2018, p. 279). This was found to be particularly challenging when observing in classrooms, where the amount of potential “data” to observe proved to be quite overwhelming. This was also one of the reasons why I chose to have a semi-structured form of observation where I had decided beforehand on four particular categories of data to observe.

According to Cohen et al. (2018) triangular techniques attempt to “*explain more fully, the richness and complexity of human behavior by studying it from more than one standpoint*” (p. 265), by combining various elements from both quantitative and qualitative research.

Although the methods applied in this research were mainly qualitative, the quantitative data acquired from statistics related to gender inequality in South Africa (occurs in chapter 1 and 2) enabled me to comprehend the scope of these challenges. Also, I applied methodological triangulation by combining the use of interviews and observation as methods to study the approach to gender-based challenges in the classrooms. This also enabled me to crosscheck the information given by the teachers in the interviews, by observing their practice in the classrooms. As will be presented in the findings chapter 5, this also revealed some contrasts in what the teachers said they did, compared to what they actually did. Additionally, I crosschecked information in the interviews by asking certain questions in the beginning of the interview, which were then asked in a different context later on in the same interview.

Validity in interviews can be interpreted as “*the truth, the correctness, and the strength of a statement*” (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015, p. 282). Ensuring validity and reliability in interviews can be a challenge since there are some uncontrollable effects in an interview which might impact the answers given, such as the position of the researcher, ethnicity, gender and social class (Cohen et al., 2018). Ensuring objectivity of the information given in an interview can be considered quite ambiguous (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015). Informants are in a position of power where they can decide what information to share and to withhold (Limerick et al. 1996 cited in Cohen et al., 2018). However, being in a constant process of reflexion can minimize these effects (see sub-chapter 3.7).

I sought to obtain reliable and valid data by preparing for the interviews in different ways as suggested by Brinkmann and Kvale (2015). First, I made sure that I had knowledge of the topic at hand, such as the curriculum, the school setting, the challenges of gender equality, as well as insight into the challenges teachers face in school settings in general, such as time and

pressure for results and quality. Secondly, I made a structure for the interview with some set questions, while at the same time being open for the possibility that the informant might want to talk more about some questions than others, as well as new questions coming up. I used active listening and referred to earlier statements made by the participant, as well as clarifying, confirming and modifying statements which weren't necessarily clear at first.

The choice of using observations and participant observation has been strategic as it is an opportunity to come as close to the situation as possible, which is an important aspect of ensuring validity in qualitative research (Cohen et al., 2018, p.247). However, in order to ensure legitimation and strengthen the reliability, participant observation should be conducted several times with the same teacher. Although this was part of the plan for the fieldwork, it turned out not to be feasible within the time frame, which is recognized as a limitation.

In observing the practice of teachers in classrooms, the reactivity, i.e. the Hawthorne-effect is important to pay attention to, although it can be challenging to avoid. Reactivity can be described as a situation where the informants behave differently as a result of being observed (Cohen et al., 2018). Teachers might alter their pedagogical practice in class as a response to being observed, which might impact the validity, as well as the reliability of the data by “romanticizing” the way in which they present themselves as teachers.

Lastly, I used respondent validation where the participants could give feedback on transcribed interviews and findings. By this I hoped to ensure that they felt correctly represented and that the reality I present in the thesis is as close to the experienced reality, independent of my claims, as possible (Cohen et al., 2018, p. 247).

One of the challenges which permeates all stages of the research is my interpretation of the data and how I select what to present and describe. I have sought to downplay any bias in my interpretation and presentation of the data by also giving voice to critical voices by informants who had opposing statements to the majority of informants. In the following sub-chapter I will present my thoughts on reflexivity in the research.

### 3.7 Reflexivity

Reflexivity can be described as “*an active and ongoing process of critical reflection on the kind of knowledge produced from research and how that knowledge is generated*” (Guillemin & Gillam, 2004). Bryman (2012) describes reflexivity as a process of reflecting upon the ways in which our own values, experiences, interests, beliefs, political commitments and social identities influence the research.

The considerations of my role as a researcher was reflected upon before entering the field: my position and identity might impact my research and findings in terms of my gender, ethnicity and personal perceptions as a white, western girl (Apentiik & Parpart, 2006, p.34). Although the role of the researcher is important to acknowledge regardless of where the research is conducted, I found the issues connected to my ethnicity and skin color difficult to prepare for. I did not know how this would unfold in South Africa where the racially discriminating apartheid system was officially replaced only 25 years ago. I prepared myself mentally in terms of being aware that establishing a relationship of trust with the informants would be highly prioritized and important. Although it went better than expected during the research, I did have some other incidents which I believe, and was made aware, was related to the color of my skin or to the fact that I was a foreigner. It is difficult to prepare for these experiences and reflections, as well as to measure or realize the impact it has on the data-collection.

My personal perceptions regarding gender equality is an issue which I have attempted to downplay throughout the stages of the research process as this might influence the questions asked, as well as the interpretation and presentation of findings. As an attempt to minimize the impact of this, I have sought to use methods such as semi-structured interviews in order to get the informants own views and perceptions, regardless of mine. Also, as mentioned previously, keeping an open dialogue with the informants throughout the research process by offering opportunity to give feedback on the transcribed interviews and findings was seen as important to ensure that the informants felt correctly represented. My aim was to enter the field open minded and aware of my position as an attempt to minimize the impact of it.

I had to take the power-relation between the researcher and the informants into consideration. This power relationship can play out in different ways. Cohen et al. (2018, p.136) point to some typicalities of the researcher as the person setting the agenda, deciding questions to be

asked, timing and duration of the research, which informants are included in the research and what counts as acceptable and useful data. I attempted to reduce this kind of power relationship by letting the participants take part in some of the decisions within a feasible frame.

### **3.8 Limitations & Challenges**

As noted in 3.1., several methodological measures were taken to ensure a comprehensive research, conducted in an ethical manner. However, there are some particular challenges and limitations of this study, some of which I will mention.

Not surprisingly, the *lack of time and access* in the field poses itself as a major limitation of this study. With more time I may have been able to give a “thicker description” of the contexts and issues at hand by including several informants such as parents, learners, as well as being able to spend more time with each teacher. Additionally, it would have been beneficial to access the Teacher Education Institutes to enrichen my perspective on if and how they include a gender-sensitive approach for future teachers. Yet, I have to acknowledge the scope of time, access and resources as this is a master research, and perhaps keep the higher ambitions and aspirations for future research.

Being an *outside-researcher* automatically poses a challenge of giving a “thick description” of the context and social world of the informants. As an outsider, I can never be sure that I comprehend the “*taken for granted*” meanings and aspects in society. Also, I reckoned that my position as a student doing research was not necessarily a benefit when negotiating access to schools with quite rigid bureaucratic structures. This was both time-consuming and challenging, as I have mentioned previously.

A final limitation of this research is the use of a *binary description of gender*. Although it aligns with the discourse used by teachers, I believe the research could have benefited from a further exploration of how the expectations of a feminine and a masculine role perpetuates the binary perceptions of gender, as well as excluding LGBTQI+ learners. LGBTQI+ learners are also heavily affected by several discriminating factors in the education system, as well as in society otherwise.

## 4. Theoretical Framework and Conceptual Clarifications

The two main theoretical frameworks chosen for this thesis is 1) a socialization framework, particularly the social construction theory, and 2) a critical pedagogy framework. The social construction theory offers a theoretical framework for understanding how the gender-based challenges in the classrooms are closely linked to the construction of gender roles in the society. The pedagogical framework will include elements of the theory of Paulo Freire's pedagogy of the oppressed, and bell hooks' feminist approach to this theory, with a particular focus on engaging in dialogue in the classrooms, in order to question the constructed gender roles.

In the next sub-chapter, I will clarify some of the main concepts in this thesis. The socialization framework is presented 4.2 and the pedagogical framework in 4.3.

### 4.1 Conceptualizing Gender

As there exist several approaches to the concept of gender and gender equality, this sub-chapter will seek to clarify the concepts and approach to gender as it is applied in this thesis; 4.1.1 Gender as a social construction, 4.1.2 An intersectional approach to feminism, 4.1.3 Parity – Equity – Equality.

#### *4.1.1 Gender as a social construction*

Describing gender is complex as there exist several approaches and understandings of the concept. Oyěwùmí (1997) describes gender as socially and culturally constructed, whereas sex refers to biology as aligned with Lorber:

Gender is a construction of two categories in hierarchical relation to each other; and it is embedded in institutions. Gender is best understood as “an institution that establishes patterns of expectations for individuals [based on their body-type], orders the social processes of everyday life, and is built into major social organizations of society, such as the economy, ideology, the family and politics. (Lorber, 1994, p. 1, cited in Oyěwùmí, 2005, p. 106)

Two remarks should be made to this definition. First, the gender categories are placed in a hierarchical relation to each other, which isn't further described by Oyěwùmí, but implies that one gender category is seen as superior to another (most likely men over women). Secondly,



this citation is based on the binary definition of gender as two categories. Momsen (2020) argues that gender is “*the socially acquired notions of masculinity and femininity by which women and men are identified*” (p. 3). However, she also argues that gender is often mistakenly mixed with binary sex categories (women and men), or primarily used to refer to women. Understanding gender as socially constructed should also take into account that gender is flexible and not simple binary constructions, including people with non-conforming identities; lesbian, gay, bi-sexual, transgender, inter-sex and queer (LGBTIQ+) (Momsen, 2020). I will argue that mistaking the definition of gender as binary sex categories has further implications on dichotomizing gender as either feminine or masculine.

Approaching gender as socially constructed rather than biologically “determined” has further implications on understanding the formation of gender identity as presented by Nomlomo (2013). She argues that this approach is ideal as it gives space for social change. Aligned with the claim from Oyěwùmí, as referred above, the social construct theory views gender as constructed within the social context including the economy, society, politics, race and religion (Stromquist & Fischmann, 2009). A combination of influences from the interaction with primary caretakers, socialization in our childhood, peer pressure in adolescence, gender divisions of work and family roles, all play a role in constructing the divisions of gender in terms of how we behave, our attitudes and emotions (Lorber, 2000). These constructions of gender are important for understanding the gender-based challenges in the schools of this research.

Butler (1990) argues that the idea of a socially and discursively constructed notion of gender originates in postmodernism feminism. Postmodern feminism makes room for multiple voices of women, recognizing the existence of the many different perspectives on making sense of human life and knowing. It questions the universalist knowledge production by acknowledging that the domination of Western feminism is not suitable in describing gender issues around the world. This is also important for comprehending the intersectional approach to feminism, which I will describe in the following section.

#### ***4.1.2 An Intersectional Approach to Feminism***

A particularly important debate on the approach to gender is related to the discussions of contextualized feminism, which includes an intersectional approach. The intersectionality of

gender means an understanding of the way gender intersects with other attributes such as ethnicity, race, religion and social class, which together can cause disadvantages and advantages (Stromquist & Fischman, 2009, p. 466).

Several scholars have criticized feminism to be largely understood in Western feminist terms (hooks, 2000; Mohanty, 2003; Nnaemeka, 2005; Smith, 2012). This tendency has been criticized, particularly by women “*variously described as ‘women of color’, ‘Third World women’, ‘black women’ and ‘indigenous women’*” (Smith, 2012, p. 168). The critique derived from the lack of recognition of context when describing what it means to be oppressed. Western feminists largely adapted the role of defining universal characteristics of women, explaining a universal oppression, based on their own subjective worldviews and experience as feminists in a Western context (Smith, 2012). Nnamenka (2005) argues that there has been a tendency to fail to define African feminism on its own terms. She argues that the failure to take into account the importance of contexts oversees the urgency of particular issues, such as the interplay of race, class and gender in oppressing women. Mohanty (2003) has called for a decolonization of feminism as Western feminists have taken the role of describing “women” as a homogenous group with “*identical interests and desires, regardless of class, ethnic, or racial location (...) which can be applied universally and cross-culturally*” (p.21).

Recalling the statements from feminist activists in the anti-apartheid struggle in South Africa (as described in section 2.2.1), several of them acknowledged that women were oppressed in different ways based on the intersection of social class and the imposed racial categories. The majority of white women were oppressed based on gender, black women were oppressed based on gender, “race” and class. This makes the fight to achieve gender equality different for women based on the intersections of oppression they are subjugated to. These intersections are still visible in the South African society today, where the political segregation and oppression during apartheid towards people based on race, class and gender continue to influence women’s (and men’s) opportunities and positions in society.

In the following section, I will clarify the approach to gender equality in this thesis by clarifying the concepts parity, equity and equality.

### **4.1.3 Parity – Equity - Equality**

Conceptualizing gender equality is necessary as the concepts of parity, equity and equality are often used interchangeably when speaking about achievements in gender equality in education. Baily & Holmarsdottir (2015) argue that the confusion in using these terms often *“limits our understanding of larger structural or systemic facets of gender injustice”* (p. 830). The negative effect of this can be seen through educational design where equity and quality *“tend to be narrowly conceived in ways that ignore related issues, including curriculum, teaching and achievement as well as a number of intersecting issues such as gender-based violence, girls’ and women’s health, and professional and personal empowerment.”* (Baily & Holmarsdottir, 2015, p. 831-832)

*Gender parity* can be understood as the quantitative focus on gender, where access to education through enrolment rates and participation in education are used as measures of progress (Holmarsdottir, 2015). The gender parity in South African education is regarded as equal, based on the narrow gap in gender enrolment rates between boys and girls (Unterhalter, 2005; Diko, 2007). However, scholars have argued that this may lead to a misconception by regarding physical access to education (equal enrolment rates of boys and girls in schools) as gender equality in education, in which it obscures the many underlying inequalities (Baily & Holmarsdottir, 2015, Arnot & Fennell, 2008, Unterhalter, 2008).

In terms of education, *gender equality* is concerned with moving beyond parity to include appropriate learning opportunities, fair treatment in schools and equal employment opportunities (Baily & Holmarsdottir, 2015). Gender equality in education can be understood as more inclusive and evolves around factors that promote boys’ and girls’ equal access to meaningful learning (Unterhalter, 2005, Diko, 2007 cited in Baily & Holmarsdottir, 2015, p. 831). Although equal access to education (gender parity) is a precondition for gender equality, equality in education deals with *“tackling multiple oppressions such as the intersection between poverty, social class, power and race, all of which create further disadvantages”* (Baily & Holmarsdottir, 2015, p. 831).

Aikman & Unterhalter (2007) argue that there is no precise difference between the terms: equality and equity. *Gender Equity* can be defined as *“the meaningful redistribution of resources and opportunities and the transformation of conditions under which women make*

*choices*” (Subrahmanian, 2005, p.29 cited in Baily & Holmarsdottir, 2015, p. 832). Gender equity is a term which can be more challenging to comprehend since it is often used interchangeably with gender equality. Baily and Holmarsdottir (2015) argue that both equity and equality concerns fairness and justice. However, equity is concerned with providing what is needed to achieve equality and to repair the injustices. For example, equity may concern the recognition of women as historically oppressed, hence they need *more* resources and opportunities than men in the same society. Equality on the other hand assumes that people are starting from the same place, and concerns a human rights framework with a focus on fair treatment, appropriate learning opportunities and equal employment opportunities (Baily & Holmarsdottir, 2015).

In this thesis, I will apply gender equality as the overarching concept as this concerns some of the factors explored in the classrooms; inclusive and equal access to meaningful learning, fair treatment in schools, all of which may be a stepping stone in promoting social justice by dismantling the intersectional oppressions of gender, poverty, class, power, race and gender.

I will now continue by presenting the first of the two main theoretical frameworks; socialization theory.

## **4.2 Socialization Theory**

While conducting research in Cape Town, I soon realized that the perceptions, attitudes and practice of gender roles was linked to social and traditional expectations. The range of expectations towards learners based on their gender was influenced by several socialization actors, including teachers, caregivers, peers and other role models in the community. This led me to consider socialization theories to analyze the findings, particularly the role of different socialization actors in fostering expectations towards gender roles. This was also found to be an important contribution in describing the challenges teachers face in addressing gender-based issues, such as the conflict between values, norms and expectations between socialization arenas and actors.

I will use parts of Berger & Luckmann’s theory in describing reality as a social construction, particularly their description of the primary- and secondary socialization, as well as the role of socialization actors. I acknowledge that this is a theory written in a different time (1966), in a

different context (U.S.), with different contextual factors impacting the theory. However, I find elements of this theory relevant in describing how socialization actors influence the social construction of gender, particularly their description of the role of significant others and peers in forming values in the socialization process. Additionally, Darnell and Hoem's (1996) socialization theory will provide a description of socialization as process between home and school. These two theories will be the basis for the three first sections: 4.2.1 The Process of Socialization, 4.2.2 Socialization Actors and 4.2.3 Socialization in School.

The last section, 4.2.4 Constructing gender identities, will make use of contributions from Nomlomo (2013) who has written about the development of a gender identity in a township high school in the Cape Flats, and Breidlid and Breidlid (2013) who was written about the same topic in South Sudan. I will also go deeper into describing the development of masculine identities in sub-section 4.2.4.1, mainly represented by Raewyn Connell and James Messerschmidt. Their theories were found to be highly relevant for analyzing and discussing the expectations towards the "masculine" role and the challenges that follow such expectations in the context of this research.

#### ***4.2.1 The process of socialization***

Socialization can be defined "*as the comprehensive and consistent induction of an individual into the objective world of society or a sector of it*" (Berger & Luckmann, 1966, p. 150).

Socialization is therefore regarded a continuous process where individuals learn to become a part of the society, which includes an awareness of contextual social norms and values (Giddens & Sutton, 2013). The central idea of Berger & Luckmann's theory is to describe how social interactions form the basis of people's perceptions, attitudes, human action and behavior in society. These interactions over time become social systems which are habitualized, meaning that frequently repeated actions become a pattern of an individual's knowledge base, and in turn is taken for granted by this individual as the way to act. In turn, this knowledge is institutionalized, meaning that it becomes an organized form of behavior and human action in society and experienced as impersonal and objective truths (Berger & Luckmann, 1966). Thus, institutionalized actions are constructed by frequently repeated actions in interaction between individuals in society.

The socialization process is usually divided into two phases; primary and secondary socialization. Primary socialization is described as the process of becoming a member of society in early childhood where the individual's first world is 'constructed' (Berger & Luckmann, 1966, p.150, 155). In this phase, a child internalizes norms based on the actions of the significant others (described in the next section). Internalization is described as process where a child goes from observing particular actions, attitudes and roles, to adapting them as their own. The internalization of norms can be exemplified through a learning process where a child learns that its mother gets angry when the child spills soup (Berger & Luckmann, 1966). In order for the child to internalize this as a generalized norm, additional significant others (exemplified by a father, grandmother, siblings) needs to support the mother's negative reaction to spilling soup. In turn, when the child recognizes that everybody reacts negatively to soup-spilling, the norm is generalized. This is also explained as the process where a child goes from learning from significant others, to the generalized others, meaning a generalized norm in society. Comprehending a child's internalization of norms from the primary socialization is relevant for understanding how learners enter the schools with certain expectations and attitudes towards gender norms and roles, which I will come back to.

Secondary socialization can be described as the process where an already socialized individual is introduced into new sectors in society, such as the school (Berger & Luckmann, 1966). The secondary socialization differs from the primary in several ways. First, the secondary socialization phase involves other agents in charge of the socialization process, such as teachers and peers. Secondly, it deals with an individual who has already formed a basis of norms, attitudes and behaviors from the significant others. This can occur as a challenge since the internalized reality from the primary socialization tends to persist (Berger & Luckmann, 1966). However, Connell (2005) argues that children are not passive recipients of norms, attitudes and behaviors in the socialization process. In fact, children and youth can discover that the reality mediated to them by their caregivers in the primary socialization is *not* the same reality for everyone.

#### **4.2.2 Socialization Actors**

Berger & Luckmann (1966) underlines the important role of the significant others in a child's socialization process. The significant others are part of the social structure an individual is born into and "*are in charge of his socialization*" (Berger & Luckmann, 1966, p. 151). This

means that a child is born into a society where the people characterized as the significant others are the primary caretakers, “*most often parents*” (Berger & Luckmann, 1966, p. 151). These significant others are therefore the first to construct the child’s objective reality. As a child’s closest caretaker, they mediate a social world to the child, which is modified and selected according to the caretaker; “*They select aspects of it in accordance with their own location in the social structure, and also by virtue of their individual, biographically rooted idiosyncrasies*” (Berger & Luckmann, 1966, p. 151). Put simply, this means that the social structure and socialization by caretakers play a major role in how a child’s world is constructed, hence the development of attitudes, actions and perceptions of gender roles. Thus, the socialization and internalization of an ‘objective world’ is significantly different for children from different backgrounds, including culture, social class and socioeconomic context.

Socialization is therefore a complex process where a range of factors influence the socialization. An influencing factor on what a child absorbs as his social world is what Berger & Luckmann (1966) calls “*the idiosyncratic coloration given it by his parents*” (p. 151). This implies that the social world is unique to all human beings and the way primary caretakers view the world will influence how their children view the world.

Berger & Luckmann (1966) argues that the primary socialization is the most important and that the secondary socialization should resemble the basic structure of the primary socialization to achieve a successful socialization (1966, p. 151). They further emphasize the importance of emotional attachment between the child and the caretakers in order for the primary socialization to be successful. Thus, for a child to internalize the significant others’ roles and attitudes and make them its own, the emotional aspect needs to be present. This also influences the identity of the child, where the child’s identity reflects its identification with the significant others. However, the identity construction is a continuous process which Berger & Luckmann (1966) argue “*entails a dialectic between identification by others and self-identification, between objectively assigned and subjectively appropriated identity*” (p. 152). In other words, they argue that developing an identity where an individual internalizes roles and attitudes is heavily influenced by the way the caretakers mediate what these roles and attitudes entail.

Some elements of Berger & Luckmann's socialization theory were inconsistent with the findings of my research. Particularly, the description of the caretakers as "*most often the parents*", which I will discuss in chapter 6, section 6.1.1. However, it proves highly relevant when considering the influence socialization actors have on the child's development of attitudes, perceptions and practice of gender roles. In the following section I will describe the secondary socialization process in schools.

### ***4.2.3 Socialization in Schools***

The socialization in school can be characterized as one arena for secondary socialization. Here, the teacher and peers are regarded as the socialization agents.

In Berger & Luckmann's (1966) socialization theory, there is an emphasis on how the secondary socialization should build upon the values and interests of the primary socialization. Similarly, Darnell and Hoem (1996) argues that a an ideal situation for socialization requires a complementary relationship between the primary socialization and the secondary, in the school in this case. The values from each of these socialization arenas will reinforce each other. And vice versa, if the values learned in school (secondary socialization) collide with that of the home (primary socialization), there will be conflict (1996, p. 271). The primary- and secondary socialization will seldom fully "complement" each other. There will always be some elements in the secondary socialization that doesn't build upon the same elements in the primary socialization. This is also naturally the case in all societies which does not consist of a homogenous groups with similar values in all aspects of life.

Social values are described as "*the most basic of human forces controlling the interaction of people*" (Darnell & Hoem, 1996, p. 277). Social values and interests are subjectively accepted as good. If there is conflict between the values at home and in the school, resocialization and desocialization can occur (Darnell & Hoem, 1996, p. 271). Resocialization and desocialization are described as processes where either the values or the interests of the home and the school socialization collide (p. 278). If this is the case, a child might experience a weakening of the self, because the school renders their values from the primary socialization irrelevant. This is in contrast to a strengthened socialization where the values and interests of the school and home reinforce each other. In a strengthened socialization, a child will not experience conflict with its identity, since the school confirms and builds upon the values



from home (Darnell & Hoem, 1996, p. 278). In the context of this research, there appeared to be several values which conflicted between the home and school in regards to perceptions, attitudes and practice of gender. However, one might question whether a conflict in values between the home and school is always rendered as negative, particularly when considering homes where gender-based violence and discriminating attitudes towards women occur. I will leave this question to be further discussed in chapter 6.

#### ***4.2.4 Constructing Gender Identities***

Developing a gender identity in early childhood is an interactive process between the child and the socialization actors; parents, other family members, peers and teachers. It is through this interaction with others, within certain social structures and contexts that children practice what is being preached, represented and structured (Messerschmidt, 2016). Thus, gender identity is *“shaped by various factors including cultural values, perceptions and practices that represent certain values, roles and expectations of particular societies and communities”* (Nomlomo, 2013, p. 122).

Breidlid and Breidlid (2013, p. 103) points out the importance of the home (primary socialization) in constructing gender identity, because this is the first space where children establish their identity. This is further negotiated through the interaction with cultural patterns and practices. However, the time spent in certain places in combination with influences from the external world, also influences the gender identity construction. The construction of a gender identity is influenced by border-crossings between the spaces in which a child encounters; *“The construction of identity is thus socially embedded where the traditional intersects with other places and/or space”* (Breidlid & Breidlid, 2013, p. 103). As Nomlomo (2013) argues, schools most often play a significant role in influencing the identity construction of learners, since this is the place where they spend most of their time with teachers, peers and friends. This is aligned with Messerschmidt (2016) who argues that gender is *“renegotiated continuously through social interaction”* (p. 43).

Developing an identity can be a challenging task for many, and the feeling of belonging to a group of peers is seen as important (Nomlomo, 2013). Further, Nomlomo (2013) argues for the importance of developing a gender identity in the adolescent years in the transition from childhood to adulthood; *“During adolescence gender identity becomes important as children*

*interact with their peers, often of the same sex, and learn to express their emotions and their sense of individuality*” (McLeod, 1998, cited in Nomlomo, 2013, p. 121). However, this research focuses on gender in the primary school, which aligns more with Bhana, Nzimakwe and Nzimakwe’s (2011) argument that forming an understanding of how children develop their gender identity and gender norms/roles in the early years is crucial in the work for gender equality. They underline how learners in primary schools attach and maintain meanings towards gender and how gender norms are created, resisted and recreated in primary schools.

These gendered cultures in the early years are constructed based on the broader social context children come from and the culture at school. Their understanding of gender identity construction is that children are considered active agents in constructing gendered cultures. This aligns with Connell’s (2005) critique towards the general view of socialization, where children are regarded as passive recipients of norms and values. Connell’s critique can also be regarded as a critique of Berger & Luckmann’s description of the socialization process described in the previous sections. Berger & Luckmann (1966) state that the social structure *determines* the social processes which affects the identity formation. However, they also indicate that these identities are not passive, rather they *“react upon the given structure, maintaining it, modifying it, or even reshaping it”* (1966, p. 194).

Primary schools have proven to be *“important sites where femininities and masculinities are produced”* (Bhana et al., 2011, p. 444). The next sub-section will give attention to an important aspect of this research, namely the construction of masculine identities.

#### ***4.2.4.1 Masculine Identities***

Aligned with gender as a social construction, masculine identities are also developed within social structures (Morell, 1998). Messerschmidt (2016) defines these social structures as *“recurring patterns of social phenomena (practices and discourses) that tend to transcend time and space and thus constrain and enable behavior in specific ways”* (p. 47). This means that there is a dialectic relationship between the development of gender identity and the social structures, where the development of a gender identity is influenced by the social structures, while at the same time, the social structures are reproduced by these gender identities. For instance, if the patterns within the social structures expect boys to not express emotions by crying, this will influence the boys’ action, by expressing such emotions otherwise. At the

same time, when the boys internalize this as the norm, they reproduce this social structure by adapting such norms.

Raewyn Connell (2005) has done extensive work in describing masculinities and offers four categories of masculinities; hegemonic, subordinate, complicit and marginalized. The three latter have in common that they are inferior to the hegemonic category. The categorization was done in an attempt to recognize the interplay between gender, race and class, while still recognizing that these categories are fluid. I limit my description to the hegemonic and subordinate category due to relevance in my thesis.

*Hegemonic* masculinity is described as the dominant masculinity in society, which presents the way men “should” behave, promoting a kind of cultural ideal. In addition to oppressing women, the hegemonic masculinity oppresses other forms of masculinities (Connell, 2005). *The subordinate* masculinity is described as men who identify as gay or homosexual. Gay men are subordinated by the dominant group in a range of practices such as political and cultural exclusion, or as victims of intimidation or violence performed by the dominant group. “Gayness” is described as completely expelled from masculinity due to the assimilation to femininity (Connell, 2005).

The concept of hegemonic masculinity has received critique as it tends to generalize the male domination of women, which in turn overlooks the difference between masculinities (Morrell, 1998). Morrell argues that this should not be overstated. Many of the men in the subordinate groups to the hegemonic masculinity might continue to live under the umbrella of hegemonic masculinity in a particular location where they contribute to this masculinity by “*exerting their physical and institutional powers in the workplace, the family and in dealings with fellow men*” (Morrell, 1998, p.608). At the same time, their “share” of access to the benefits of being a man in a patriarchal society are diluted, exemplified by how working-class men with limited access to labour markets and wages have reduced power over women.

Morrell (1998) has described how the divided history of South Africa has been characterized by different categories of masculinity. Race, class and geographical location are elements which continue to impact the relations among masculine identities. At one point, Morell argues that although white men held the power over all other men, they could still agree on one thing; the domination of women. However, the different forms of masculinities change

over time. Apartheid caused a division between white masculinities and African masculinities (Black, Coloured) in the sense that the latter was in opposition to the former. However, the masculinities were also crucially different in the sense that the African masculinity as linked to the countryside, to chiefs and to the homesteads, were erased by men who “*lost their jobs, lost their dignity and expressed their feelings of emasculation in violent ways*” (Morrell, 1998, p. 630).

Morrell (1998) argues that hegemonic masculinity “*is a key element of patriarchy*” (p. 609). in which both hegemonic masculinity and patriarchy are developed and maintained in particular locations. hooks (1982) argues that to end patriarchy, we need to realize that everyone has a part in upholding these structures, regardless of gender. Although men and boys are the ones who benefit from patriarchal orders due to their superiority to females, hooks (1982) argues that these benefits “*come with a price*”, men are required to dominate, to exploit and oppress women, exercising violence towards women if this is regarded as essential in upholding the patriarchal structures. Connell (2005) identifies patriarchy as including four locations: production, sexuality, reproduction and socializing children. Particularly socialization will be a key element in this research, looking at how teachers influence the gendered socialization among the learners.

In the South African context, masculinity has often been related to the prevalence of violence among men (Morell, 1998). Magaraggia and Connell (2012) argues that there is a need to contest the hegemonic masculinity and instead make non-violent masculinities hegemonic in order to fight violence against women (Magaraggia & Connell, 2012). Their idea is to show that non-violent forms of masculinity also are functional ways of being a man and to promote this idea of contesting violent masculinities into wider knowledge bases such as academic communication (Magaraggia & Conell, 2012). In turn, this can create other conceptions of masculine identities, including honorability and respect. With this as a background, engaging critical thinking among learners in schools is crucial in the work of contesting the hegemonic masculinity.

### **4.3 Pedagogical Framework**

This sub-chapter will present the pedagogical framework for this research. Paulo Freire’s pedagogy of the oppressed is presented in the first section, focusing on how education can

liberate the oppressed by enhancing critical thinking, in this context related to critical thinking regarding gender roles. bell hooks' pedagogical approach is similar to Freire's, but integrating a feminist approach that is particularly important in this research. The last section will describe how dialogue in the classrooms can be applied as a pedagogical tool in questioning the constructed gender roles, which includes elements from both Freire and hooks' theories. The main reason for selecting the pedagogical framework of Freire and hooks, is their ability to question oppressive structures in the societies surrounding the learners. They also emphasize the importance of the societal context of the learners when building a knowledge base in the classrooms. Additionally, they provide a specific pedagogical tool, "dialogue", which I believe is crucial for the learners to become aware of the root causes of gender inequality. This might initiate reflection and a sense of hope in the work of changing these oppressive structures.

#### ***4.3.1 Pedagogy of the Oppressed***

Paulo Freire was a Brazilian educator, who has been a leading figure in developing what is known as critical pedagogy. He is perhaps best known for his work "Pedagogy of the Oppressed", which was published in 1970. The basis for this book was Freire's work with illiterate, poor peasants in the rural areas of Brazil. His critical pedagogy in this context was concerned with engaging in co-operative learning and dialogue with the peasants, fostering critical consciousness and thinking so that they could increase their ability to question the injustice brought upon them, and to use this in the fight for emancipation. (Freire, 1970) His work was banned by several governments around the world, including Brazil, and South Africa (Nekhwevha, 2002). The banishment of his work by the apartheid government in South Africa only serves to substantiate how the education system served as a political arena to control the segregation and oppression of all other than Whites.

Freire's pedagogy of the oppressed has catalyzed a broad specter of approaches to pedagogy aiming to empower the oppressed. The oppressed needed to become aware of their situation as oppressed by what he termed conscientization; "*learning to perceive social, political, and economic contradictions, and to take action against the oppressive elements of reality*" (Freire, 1970, p. 9). In other words, a liberation of the oppressed requires fostering a critical consciousness. In order to realize such empowerment, Freire (1970) argued that a cooperative teacher-student educative model was required, including dialogue, co-operation and critical

thinking. Through this pedagogy, the oppression and its causes become objects for reflection by the oppressed. It is from this reflection that the oppressed will become engaged in the fight for their liberation (Freire, 1970, p. 22). This pedagogy emerged as a critique and opposing alternative to what he termed “the banking education” where learners were treated as passive, silent recipients of knowledge.

Manifesting a sense of hope among the oppressed was essential in the journey towards liberation. For this to happen, the oppressed needed to be able to view their situation as a limitation of their opportunities, rather than a determined fate. The former could foster a sense of hope towards the transformation of the current oppressing situation. (Freire, 1970)

#### ***4.3.1.1 Dialogue for Transformative Learning***

Freire (1970) emphasizes dialogue as an important tool in the co-operative teacher-student model. He argues that dialogue is the essence in transforming and shaping people’s world view. Dialogue can be used as a pedagogical tool for creating common knowledge between teachers and students, as well as fostering critical thinking, which he describes as

Thinking which discerns an indivisible solidarity between the world and the people and admits of no dichotomy between them – thinking which perceives reality as process, as transformation, rather than static entity – thinking which does not separate itself from action, but constantly immerses itself in temporality without fear of the risks involved. (p. 65)

This citation underlines critical thinking as a way of viewing the world as changeable, rather than static, which in turn can be linked to the importance of manifesting a sense of hope towards change and liberation among the learners. He argues that a dialogue is different from the banking form of education (See 4.3.1), a situation where educators conform to a learning process where he or she acts as the narrator of knowledge and the learner is intended to be “filled” with knowledge. The banking approach fails to make room for critical thinking and learners will “*memorize mechanically the narrated content*” (Freire, 1970, p. 45). The exceptional learner in the banking approach is hence the learner that manages to absorb the knowledge which the teacher narrates by patiently receiving, memorizing and repeating this knowledge. This, Freire (1970) argues, is a barrier to creativity, transformation and shared knowledge.

In order to transform the world and achieve education for liberation, the dialogue needs to be the learning process for both learners and educators, including all parts in the dialogue. Similar to his argument that a sense of *hope* is required in order to believe in the transformation of an oppressing situation, he underlines *faith* in humankind as a requirement of the dialogue. This includes faith in “*people’s power to make and remake, to create and re-create, faith in their vocation to be more fully human (...)*” (Freire, 1970, p. 63). In short, dialogue requires humility, faith in people, hope and engagement in critical thinking. Furthermore, Freire (1970) argues that dialogue does not directly change an oppressive situation, rather it can raise awareness towards oppressive structures through critical thinking. Changing an oppressive situation he argues, must be combined with “praxis”, which is described as action and reflection upon the structures as we know them. He underlines that human beings are “beings of praxis”, where actions have shaped the world as we know it. This can be seen in close relation to how gender roles are shaped through interactions and social relations, which forms the basis of what for example Butler (1990) terms “*gender as performative*”.

Thus, an authentic education does not involve a hierarchy between learners and educator, but rather carried out as learning *with* the educator, “*mediated by the world – a world which impresses and challenges both parties, giving rise to views or opinions about it.*” (Freire, 1970, p. 66). Applying a co-operative teaching model by the use of dialogue in the classroom can be seen as crucial in addressing gender-based challenges in the classrooms. This might make space for learners to reflect upon the unequal gender roles in society, and share from their own experiences in their everyday life.

#### ***4.3.2 A Feminist Approach – Engaged Pedagogy***

Freire was a great inspiration for bell hooks. She has written extensively on liberating pedagogy from a feminist perspective. Her pedagogical practice is termed as “engaged pedagogy”, based on education for liberation, including the interplay of anticolonial, critical, and feminist pedagogies (hooks, 1994). She argues that this has the possibility to expand the pedagogical practice, to transgress, by engaging “*directly both the concern for interrogating biases in curricula that reinscribe systems of domination (such as racism and sexism) while simultaneously providing new ways to teach diverse groups of students*” (hooks, 1994, p. 10). However, she underlines that engaged pedagogy relies on the adaptation of pedagogical

methods to each classroom, and thus the pedagogical framework she presents should be viewed as inspiration, rather than a blueprint for implementation.

The essence of hooks' approach to pedagogy was also based on a co-operative teacher-student model, where students along with the educator were active participants in class, rather than passive recipients of knowledge. She describes teaching as a performative act which "*offers the space for change, invention, spontaneous shifts, that can serve as a catalyst drawing out the unique elements in each classroom*" (p. 11). This way, education could be practiced as freedom through what hooks termed "*critical awareness and engagement*", based on Freire's term conscientization. hooks (1994) argues that awareness (or Freire's conscientization) of attitudes and perceptions is not exhaustively for change in itself, but something to be combined with meaningful "praxis" (See 4.3.1), where a change in attitudes and perceptions forms the basis of how we act and how we reflect upon our actions.

Additionally, hooks (1994) includes the teacher as part of the learning process:

When education is the practice of freedom, students are not the only ones who are asked to share, to confess. Engaged pedagogy does not simply seek to empower students. Any classroom that employs a holistic model of learning will also be a place where teachers grow and are empowered by the process. (hooks, 1994, p. 21)

Further she states that teachers who are willing to share their own experiences and vulnerability in the classroom, also are the teachers who are most likely to work on transforming the curriculum towards not reinforce systems of domination or reflect biases (hooks, 1994). This is similar to Freire's (1970) point where he underlines that "*a dialogue cannot exist without humility*" (p. 63).

In sum, hooks (1994) underlines how the combination of a change in attitudes, learned through co-operative teaching based on situational knowledge of the oppressive structures in the learners contexts, can bring change in how our praxis towards these structures appear. This in turn, can be the basis of transforming the oppressive structures. In the case of South Africa, women and girls are often portrayed as oppressed by patriarchal systems. The relevance of applying an engaged pedagogy in South African classrooms can be seen through the importance of girls' ability to question their position as oppressed. Similar, boys who are



subordinated to the hegemonic masculinity, but continue to strive for fitting into the ideal masculine identity, should necessarily be included in this perspective. Aligned with Freire's words, a simple banking education where the teachers "fill" the learners with information on gender topics through a monologue, will not lead to liberation for the oppressed. Liberation requires critical thinking where all learners can question their position in a gender unequal society, which in turn can inform their actions to change these oppressive structures. Additionally, it is important for them to feel a sense of hope that change is possible, and to learn that they can be active agents in shaping a different reality than the current situation.

In chapter 6, I will discuss whether the teachers apply a co-operative teaching model by creating common knowledge between learners and teachers, based on their own life experiences, or if they conform to a banking form of education.

## 5. Findings

This chapter presents the empirical data from the research. The findings are structured in three main categories based on the thematical order of the research questions.

The first part, ‘Gender-based challenges’, presents the teachers’ and the organizations’ opinions of the current gender-based challenges in the schools and the communities, hence answering the first research question: “*What are the current gender-based challenges in the case schools?*”. Identifying these challenges are important as they lay the basis for comprehending what teachers’ address in school.

The second part, ‘Addressing gender-based challenges in the case schools’, will explore how teachers approach the gender-based challenges in school, seeking answers for the second research question: “*To what extent and in what ways are teachers addressing gender-based challenges in the classrooms?*”.

The third part, ‘Practical and pedagogical challenges’ will present the teachers’ experience of the main challenges of addressing gender-based challenges and is related to the last research question: “*To what extent does addressing gender-based challenges cause pedagogical and practical challenges in teaching and learning?*”.

In the last part I will conclude the chapter by presenting the main findings to the three research questions before discussing the findings in chapter 6. The findings are derived from thirteen individual interviews with teachers, eight classroom observations, four individual interviews with representatives from gender organizations, and informal conversations during my field work in Cape Town.

### 5.1 Gender-based challenges

Seeking answers to the first research question was important in order to establish a common understanding of which gender-based challenges are prominent in the context of the case schools. In the interviews with both teachers and organizations I asked if they thought there were gender-based challenges at the schools, or in the communities surrounding the schools, and if so, what these challenges were. The vast majority said that gender-based challenges were prominent, alongside challenges of crime, gangsterism, safety, poverty, alcoholism and

drug abuse. The following sections, 5.1.2 to 5.1.5, will present the gender-based challenges as voiced by the informants.

### ***5.1.1 Perceptions of Gender Roles and Norms in the Communities***

In the interviews with both teachers and organizations, I asked how they perceived gender roles and norms in the communities surrounding the schools, and in South Africa in general. I followed up this question by asking the teachers if these gender roles were visible in the schools as well. Additionally, some of the classroom observations gave me deeper insight into these perceptions. Thus, the following two sub-sections will summarize the findings from interviews with teachers and organizations, as well as add information from classroom observations regarding the perceptions of gender roles and norms.

#### ***5.1.1.1 A Patriarchal Society – Insights from National Gender Organizations***

The majority of informants I interviewed from the organizations painted a picture of a patriarchal South Africa, where men still held the advantages above women as suggested by the informant from *GALA* below;

It is evident that men have more access to socioeconomic opportunities in South Africa due to the remnants of archaic systems of control such as colonialism, missionary Christianity and henceforth, patriarchal systems of power are very prevalent in a contemporary South African society. (*GALA*)

Two of the organizations, ADAPT and Sonke Gender Justice had initiated projects in collaborations with schools to particularly address gender-based violence. One of the informants from ADAPT described how the unequal power relations between males and females was linked to the gender-based violence in schools, which is an example of how unequal gender roles in the communities influence the behavior and attitudes of learners towards gender in schools. The goal of ADAPT's program, "*Teenz Alliance; Ending sexual violence in schools*", is to question cultural gender practices that perpetuate the gender inequalities, with a particular focus on gender-based violence. The gender-based violence in the case schools will be presented in section 5.1.4.

The representative from Gender Dynamix argued that there is still a division of gender roles;

A large part of me thinks that patriarchal roots are still systematic within society. Thinking back to how we were taught how a lady does this and that, those are all very patriarchal kinds of rules that women are expected to adhere to and be groomed to do in the household.

*(Gender Dynamix)*

One might think that this suggests traditional roles where women cater for the household and men cater for the income. However, the representative from *GALA* stated that South African families and households are often not structured in a conventional manner due to absent fathers or the fact that children are often raised by grandparents or older siblings. In this regard, she argued that the traditional perception of men as heads of the households was not necessarily the case in the contemporary context;

The idea that men are the ‘heads’ of households is therefore a farce, but unfortunately patriarchal hierarchies are very prevalent in South African societal structures. (*GALA*)

These family structures were mentioned by teachers at all the schools: absent fathers, single mothers, children being catered for by grandparents or other family members (Interviews). In the following sub-section I will present the teachers’ perceptions of the unequal gender roles and norms in the communities surrounding the schools, and how this was viewed as an obstacle for reaching gender equality.

#### ***5.1.1.2 Unequal gender roles – an obstacle for gender equality***

In answering the interview question regarding the status of gender equality in society, several teachers mentioned how they thought that the perceptions of gender roles and norms in the communities served as an obstacle towards achieving gender equality, as the following quotes suggest:

So we come from a particular culture where gender equality is not the reality. The culture still expects women to act in a certain way, have certain types of commitments and ways of doing things. And it also expects the man to behave in a certain way so it all comes down to physical behavioral attributes as well as social and emotional attributes. (Male Teacher, gr 6, Eland P)

When asked about the roles and norms of men and women in the community, several of the teachers at all the schools mentioned how traditional norms and roles were still prevalent, as illustrated by this quote from a teacher at Eland Primary:

I feel that our society paints a picture of the women in the kitchen, cleaning the house, and the male making the braai, carrying all the heavy things. (Female Teacher, gr. 1, Eland P)

This quote might indicate how men are perceived as the physically stronger gender. Several teachers mentioned in particular the expectations towards men being masculine and strong, as exemplified below;

South-African culture actually doesn't make place for males to... You need to be the macho man and I'm not sure if it's getting more diverse, but it's frowned upon to do certain things if you are a male. I think the gender roles are still being upheld and that if you're a little bit different from... I feel like the boys need to puff up their chest and always be the man, show how manly they are to be able to survive. (Female Teacher, gr. 5, Mouse P)

This female teacher at Mouse Primary said that these gender roles were common in several cultures in South-Africa, including Xhosa, Zulu and Afrikaans culture. She shared experiences of her own culture in the Afrikaans community where men are supposed to be the ideal strong man, who does certain 'manly' things. For example, she stated that the male was expected to protect the family and was responsible for keeping them safe.

Several of the teachers spoke about how men in a household were seen to have more power than women. One of the male teachers at Lion Primary described how there was a lack of respect for women, where men demonstrate their power through violence;

So we are talking about this gender-based violence where women are oppressed. Women are not respected at home because they are not respected in society. Women were previously oppressed in South Africa and it was legal. So let's say my dad abused my mom, I see it, I do it to my wife, my children see it, they do it to their wives. So it's a cycle. Second reason I would say is just lack of respect, lack of values. We have values but we value the wrong thing. We don't value the woman for who she is. We value her for what she can give us. I think that's one of the biggest problems. (Male Teacher, Lion P)

As this teacher describes, men demonstrating power through violence towards women is linked to the historical oppression of women, as has been mentioned in section 2.3.1. On the other hand, one of the male teachers at Lion Primary argued that gender-based violence in the homes might also have to do with the fact that men disliked that women could manage the household without a man. This may be linked to statements from several other teachers. They questioned the real sense of the power of men, where several of the men in the community were unemployed, involved in drugs, alcoholism or crime and gangsterism, whereas women were often responsible for the majority of household tasks; attending a job, cleaning and cooking in the household and catering for the children. One of the teachers at Salamander Primary expressed concern for how this affected the learners;

They (learners) don't adapt to the mom who is working, who's breaking her back for you. They see dad and his friends, gangster friends, sitting and doing nothing and clearly they have the better life. Because here you are, just chilling, you got no job, but you have the money, and that's what they emulate because that's what they want to be. (*Female Teacher, gr. 7, Salamander P*)

These two sub-sections have provided a brief picture of some of the challenges of achieving gender equality in the South African society; unequal gender roles and the lack of respect for women. In the following section, I will present how the teachers described these perceptions of gender roles and norms among the learners in the schools.

### ***5.1.2 Perceptions of Gender Roles and Norms in the Schools***

This section describes the perceptions of gender roles and norms among the learners in the schools in three sub-sections. The first sub-section describes how the learners attached meaning to the different expectations of gender roles by comprehending tasks and duties as either for boys or for girls. The second sub-section describes restrictions for girls regarding activities outside school, and how this might be linked to the participation in sports in school. The last sub-section presents how the learners' attitudes towards teachers varied depending on the gender of the teacher.

### ***5.1.2.1 Preconceived Notions of “Boy-Tasks” & “Girl-Tasks”***

As presented in section 5.1.1, there exists certain expectations towards the tasks and duties of women and men in the communities. Several teachers mentioned how this impacted the learners’ expectations towards what is considered appropriate tasks for boys and girls, as exemplified by the male teacher at Lion Primary;

I'll let the boys take the cloth and I say dust that down, could you, they say “No, I don't want to do that, that's a girls work”. Boys sweep the yard, girls they don't. It's ok for the father to sit and drink, women don't do this. (*Male Teacher, gr. 5, Lion P*)

This quote shows how learners might react when assigned tasks they do find unsuited for their gender. This was also mentioned when girls questioned why they couldn't enter the classrooms first as stated by the male teacher at Eland Primary;

(...) and quite a big thing about this is that the girls will say “Well Sir, why can't we go first because we are girls and we have to go first”. (*Male Teacher, gr. 6, Eland P*)

He said that the way the learners react to these changes also says something about the general perception of gender norms and gender roles in the surrounding environments of the learners. Additionally, he stated that the learners will point out if someone does something which is contradicting towards their perceptions of gender roles and norms;

In terms of discrimination, specifically, gender-based discrimination, you will hear the remarks. It's more like ‘you can't do this because you are a girl, you can't do this because you are a boy, why would you do this, you are a boy, why would you dress like this, you're a girl’ (*Male Teacher, gr. 6, Eland P*)

This links back to the expectations towards gender roles as presented in 5.1.1 and how this plays out in schools, where peers are part of shaping these gender roles. Some of the teachers pointed out how learners risked being bullied if they didn't conform to the general perception of what is expected of them based on their gender. This will be described in section 5.1.3. Although these preconceived notions of appropriate tasks for boys and girls was mentioned by the majority of the teachers, there was one of the teachers at Eland Primary who had a different opinion, which shows that teachers experience these challenges differently:

I think that with these modern children, millennium babies, I don't think they actually see it like 'oh, boys must always do that and girls must always do that'. (Female Teacher, gr. 5, Eland P)

### ***5.1.2.2 Restrictions for Girls – Safety Measures***

During the class-discussion on gender equality in grade 7 at Salamander Primary, the learners revealed that girls and boys have quite different norms or rules related to their freedom to choose what they can and can't do after school. When I asked what they usually would do after school, several of the girls said that they couldn't go outside, they had to stay home, while boys could go outside and play. This was also confirmed by the teacher in the same class where she said that since people in the community attempt to protect the girls, the rules for girls and boys differ:

I think that in our community we try our best to protect our girls, not very successfully. But we try our best to protect them in the sense that we maybe won't allow them out as often as we would with the boys. The society tends to say 'no, no, no, you must stay inside' because if you don't, you will be labelled as "Gintu" (Afrikaans for prostitute) and our girls are very well aware of that, especially our good girls and they don't want those labels. (Female Teacher, gr. 7, Salamander P)

This statement points out how social norms enable control of what girls and boys do. While girls might be labelled as "prostitute" if they hang outside after school, boys are not subjugated to this same labelling. This might also be linked to how the male is expected to protect females as described in sub-section 5.1.1.2, which further restricts girls' ability to choose what they want to do after school. The learners in grade 7 at Salamander Primary, also expressed how the men or boys are viewed as the protectors;

Researcher: What about safety, what can each of you do to stay safe?

Girl-learner: Stay at home

Boy-learner (1): Walk in groups

Boy-learner (2): The girls needs to get a boyfriend who can protect them

*(Observation, Class-discussion, gr. 7, Salamander P)*

This was similar to the classroom observation grade 6 at Lion Primary, where the learners expressed a strong focus on how women need to claim their rights for safety and protection.



Two selected notes from one of the groups' mindmap shows a similarity in the learners thoughts on women's safety: "*Women should be protected when needed to leave the house (by men)*" and "*Men should protect women at all times during night or day*" (Observation, gr. 6, Lion P). I will elaborate further on how the teacher approached this in section 5.2.3 Practical Lessons and Demonstrations.

### **5.1.2.3 Attitudes towards Teachers**

As mentioned, the teachers' experiences was an important finding to comprehend how the gender roles influence the learners' attitudes towards teachers based on their gender. At Lion Primary, the male teacher explained how he intentionally had gotten the "worst-behaved" class in school due to his ability to gain respect from the learners:

People often ask why I don't have discipline problems in my class, but they (learners) see me as a male. I'm big built, I speak loud so they listen because that's what they experience outside and they tend not to listen to the female teachers. (*Male Teacher, gr. 5., Lion P*)

This teacher also said that several learners lack respect for the female teachers. Female teachers at two of the case schools, Salamander Primary and Lion Primary, confirmed this. One of the female teachers at Lion Primary told me how she had experienced the disrespect towards women as a major issue especially among learners coming from Xhosa culture. She had previously worked at a school in a Xhosa-dominated community and compared her challenges of being a female teacher in Lion Primary to those in the former school:

Especially in the stronger cultures, isiXhosa, the male is dominant. I have three boys who clearly won't listen to me because I'm a woman. They will disrespect me to the last point, and I know because I worked in a school where it was dominant isiXhosa and it was in a township so I understand their culture. The louder I speak, the worse I am going to make this whole situation. So, I must also respect their culture and also educate them because that's all they know, "I'm the man and you are nothing". (*Female Teacher, gr. 2, Lion P*)

During the classroom-observations with the male teacher at Eland Primary, I noticed that the environment was very different from the two female teachers at the same school. The learners were quiet, well behaved and waited for their turn to speak. Also, learners from other classes kept entering this teacher's class during the time of observation. When I asked the teacher why they got sent here, he said that the other teachers used to send the 'bad-behaved' children

to his class because they behaved better in his class than in other classes with female teachers.  
(*Observation, Eland P*)

When I asked one of the female teachers at Eland Primary if this could be seen as a link to the lack of respect for women in the community, she confirmed this and said that she thought the school was reproducing the cycle of gender roles due to the lack of men in lower grades and women in management positions. In response to a question on what the teachers thought was the reason for this gender division, they often argued that this was linked to the general pattern in society where certain expectations towards gender roles played out in the gender representation in certain occupations. One of the female teachers at Mouse Primary told me that for men to be reading a toddler book or sitting in a classroom with small children deviated from these expectations. Several teachers emphasized the importance of challenging these expectations towards women and men regarding appropriate occupation, which was the basis for one of the class-discussions at Lion Primary, which I will present in section 5.2.3.

The findings presented in this section might also be connected to how men are more respected than women in the communities, as described in section 5.1.2. The learners enter the schools with preconceived perceptions of gender roles and norms, which in turn plays out in their attitudes and practice of gender in school. This forms part of the basis for discussion in chapter 6.

### ***5.1.3 Bullying Learners Based on Gender Stereotypes***

In the interviews I had with the teachers, I asked what would happen if a child didn't live up to the expected norms of the gender role. At all the schools, teachers mentioned episodes where children were bullied if they didn't live up to the specific gender role that was expected of them. One of the teachers at Salamander Primary said that this could be name-calling other kids, mainly boys, for "*mofi*" which is a negatively loaded word for being gay in Afrikaans. She said that especially two boys in her class that did not fit the expected norms of being a boy, such as having a ponytail or behaving more 'feminine' than other boys. I asked her why this happened:

I think it's a stigma that our society has placed on them. To be gay means you're less of a person. Being a lesbian is not an issue. But a man not being a man is an issue, which I think is very strange. (Female Teacher, gr. 6, Salamander P)

This quote also shows how the expectations towards gender roles are quite rigid, by stating that "a man not being a man is an issue", which also implies that identifying as gay makes you inferior to the typical "masculine man". The teacher in grade 1 at Eland Primary also exemplified how one of her boy-learners was bullied because he would rather play with the girls and acted more "feminine" than the other boys;

I had a little boy in my class that was very feminine. (...) That personality, he has it, he's just mister friendly, mister kind, mister everything. I can just see one day when he grows up, he is going to be part of that team, and you know what, that's ok. But all the teasing and the bullying and the nastiness. He was bullied on the playground by other learners, and it was happening at the gate in the afternoon when he had to wait for his taxi, and in the taxi. (Female Teacher, gr. 1, Eland P)

This teacher showed a great concern for this boy growing up in the community they lived in and said that her heart breaks for him when she imagines all the names and the bullying he will be going through in the future.

These findings are crucial points for discussing the construction of masculine identities in chapter 6. In the following section I will go on to describe how gender-based violence articulated as a particular challenge in the schools.

#### ***5.1.4 Gender-Based Violence***

At three of the four schools, teachers stated that physical violence by boys towards girls was one of the gender-based challenges they faced. The male teacher at Lion Primary told me that several boys in the school got involved with bad role models in the community, often involved in gangsterism. He said that this was mainly a risk factor for the boys who in turn adopted these bad role models behavior. I asked him how this behavior played out in school:

There are some learners who transgress and they hit females at school. (...) Any conflict situation gets solved with violence, that's the rule of law on the street and then that becomes the rule of law in the school. (Male Teacher, gr. 5, Lion P)

Teachers at Salamander Primary and Mouse Primary also explained how gender-based violence in the communities and in the homes affected the learners' behavior in the schools:

(...) they are coming from a background where to smack a woman or to hit their mothers by their fathers, they see it all the time and they tend to do that in the classroom. Like they'll just wake up and they will just hit a girl. (Female Teacher, gr. 3, Salamander P)

It's definitely an issue where women get abused in the community, a lot, even in class. (...) You know the saying "You don't hit a girl", I don't think the boys understand it, I don't think they understand why we shouldn't hit a woman. (Male Teacher, gr. 7, Mouse P)

These statements from three of the four schools are included to show the commonality of this issue. The only exception was in Eland Primary, where the teachers didn't speak of gender-based violence as a main challenge *in* the school, but rather something that was a challenge for the learners in their homes and in the community (Interviews, Eland P). However, one of the teachers at Eland Primary stated that the boys tend to be more aggressive than the girls:

I'm probably going to sound a little sexist if I say this, but the boys are mainly the ones with these problems. They become more aggressive, you know. We need to do the fighting because we are the boys. They are a bit more aggressive than the girls who come from the same situation. (Female Teacher, gr. 5, Eland P)

The female teacher in grade 7 at Salamander Primary told me about two boys in her class who were constantly absent, which was also a result of being suspended based on their behavior. This was related to gender-based violence, as well as their behavior in general where she described them as having concentration problems in class, acting out violently and disrupting the class on a daily basis. She described one of these boys as involved with the "wrong crowd", as well as coming from a poor background, with a single mom who was struggling to make ends meet.

This section has provided a brief picture of how gender-based violence is visible in the majority of the case schools, which is a reflection of this issue in the communities as described in section 5.1.1. This may also be linked to the expectations of the male role, where the “masculine man” has been described as the ideal. This will be discussed further in chapter 6. I will continue the next section by describing the findings that revealed a gender gap in academic achievement, in favor of girls.

### ***5.1.5 The Gender Gap in Academic Achievement***

The teachers were asked if there were gender differences in academic results in their class. The majority said that the girls in their class usually performed better when considering the overall academic achievements:

Girls generally perform better than boys because they are a bit better disciplined than boys. The boys are struggling with discipline problems, concentration, they're struggling with learning difficulties. (Male Teacher, gr. 5, Lion P)

One of the teachers in Mouse Primary gave a similar response where she also reflected upon how the gender roles played out in academic differences:

Girls are obviously better academically, they work better, their books are neater, they're more contentious and the boys are... Well, there are a lot of them who work very well but they're wild, they want to play games, be boys. (*Female Teacher, gr. 5, Mouse P*)

The teachers' responses at Eland Primary were slightly different to the other schools. The female teacher in grade 5 said that the top achievers were gender balanced, but in contrast to the other schools, she had more girls than boys struggling in her class. The two other teachers thought it was starting to balance out to some extent as suggested by the male teacher:

I expect girls and boys to perform equally on the academic base. I'm thinking about the top achievers that I have, it's quite balanced, but you still find it's mostly female dominated. (Male Teacher, gr. 6, Eland P)

When I asked about which factors he thought might influence on the gender difference in academic achievement, he suggested that there might be different expectations towards learners depending on their gender:

I think because a lot of learners hear things. I don't want to use the phrase, but they hear things such as "you are a girl you should be doing this, you should be studying harder, if you're not going to be smart in your class, you're not going to be this or be that". (...) That's things that they hear from their parents. You will hear excuses from the boys like "Sir, I couldn't study because of soccer" or "I had this class". You will not necessarily hear girls making excuses. A lot of people will say this phrase "boys will be boys". So if they don't finish a task or they're not performing academically, they will just say "boys will be boys". Which I think is not necessarily the truth at all. (*Male Teacher, gr. 6, Eland P*)

Although the gender gap in academic achievement was highlighted as a case, a few teachers explained how they thought that the academic variations between the learners could not solely be explained by gender, but rather individual differences in terms of resources and support from their home environment.

Having presented some of the main gender-based challenges teachers face, I will move on to present the findings on how teachers approach these challenges in class.

## **5.2 Teachers' approaches to gender-based challenges**

With the knowledge of the gender-based challenges in the case schools, I asked the teachers how they addressed these challenges. My question was twofold. First, I asked the teachers whether they thought the Life Skills/Life Orientation curriculum adequately addressed these challenges. As mentioned in section 2.3.2, LS/LO was found to be the subject specifically including topics on gender. Secondly, I asked them whether they addressed these challenges in other ways. Several of the teachers said that they had to address these challenges in their everyday practice regardless of what the curriculum says.

The first section will present the teachers' opinion of Life Skills/Life Orientation as a framework for addressing the gender-based challenges. The following four sections will present the teachers' approaches to these challenges in a thematic order: 5.2.2 Dialogue:

communication & group-discussions, 5.2.3 Practical lessons- and demonstrations, 5.2.4 Challenging underlying gender norms and finally 5.2.5 Attempting to address boys' act of violence.

### ***5.2.1 Opinions of Life Skills/Life Orientation as a Framework for approaching Gender-based Challenges***

In the interview with teachers I asked about their opinions of the relevance of Life Skills/Life Orientation (LS/LO) as a framework for addressing the described gender-based challenges. There did not seem to be a common agreement among the teachers on whether the topics within LS/LO adequately addressed gender-based challenges. It must be mentioned that the teachers didn't have the CAPS document at hand during interviews, meaning that these findings are based on their perceptions and experiences as teachers. The three quotations below exemplify the varying opinions;

It definitely addresses relevant issues. In the first term we did sexual education. A lot of them are unsure about their sexuality, what's appropriate and what's inappropriate. For example, the boys always touch the girls, and you have to explain to them that it's not appropriate. (*Male Teacher, gr. 7, Mouse P*)

Life Skills does address aspects related to gender equality to some extent, but it doesn't address it in depth. (*Female Teacher, gr. 3, Salamander P*)

Last term there was a big focus on what is discrimination, gender equality, stigmatizing, so yes, it definitely is included in the curriculum, but it's not really something that is actively taught. (*Female Teacher, gr. 5, Mouse P*)

The quotation from this last teacher underlines how these topics aren't actively taught. When I asked her to amplify this, she stated that there was a lack of prioritizing topics within Personal- and Social Well-being (PSWB) (one of the learning areas of LS/LO), where most of the gender topics are included:

I don't want to throw anybody under a bus here, but when I came into this school, I wasn't teaching PSWB, I was only teaching art. And the teachers weren't teaching PSWB, they were

just giving the kids the tests at the end of the term. So, it was never actively taught. There is no real focus on these issues. I feel it's neglected. (Female Teacher, gr. 5, Mouse P)

This was in contrast to some of the other teachers at Lion Primary and Eland Primary who stated that the curriculum guides them strictly throughout the year related to the teaching practice and assessments as suggested below:

The curriculum, we use it for everything. This is our bible, our bread and butter. Every day is an unrealistic marathon, but we try. If you read CAPS, it will tell you exactly what you must do and how you must do it. (Female Teacher, gr. 1, Eland P)

This section has provided two important points. 1) Several teachers state that topics related to gender *does* feature in the curriculum of LS/LO, while some teachers claim that they are not necessarily addressed in depth. 2) These topics are not necessarily actively taught.

### ***5.2.2 Dialogue: Communication & Group-discussions***

Several teachers described how they would engage the learners in dialogues regarding gender-based challenges, either related to topics in the curriculum, or when it was natural to discuss these topics when they emerged in everyday interactions. The two following sub-sections present how some of the teachers focused on relating the discussion to the learners' own experiences (5.2.2.1) and how the bill of rights and safety for girls emerged as a topic in a class-discussion on gender equality (5.2.2.2).

#### ***5.2.2.1 Relating Discussions to the Learners' Experiences***

Establishing a relationship of trust between the learner and the teacher is essential in terms of communication. It is important to know the child and provide a safe space in class, which in turn can improve the structures for learning. This was the standpoint of one of the grade 3 teachers at Salamander Primary (Female Teacher, gr. 3, Salamander P). When asked about how she dealt with gender-based challenges in her classroom she said that bringing the children from the known to the unknown by using their own experiences was her way of approaching these issues. For instance, she had arranged for a group-discussion in class following the national protests on gender-based violence, when one of the learners had told her about his home situation:



“My daddy shouts at home and then my mommy must keep quiet”. So I asked, “do you think that’s right?” and he said “no”, so I asked “why?” He said it was because sometimes his mommy cries. Then I said, “how does it make you feel?” He said it makes him feel sad because then he crawls into his mommy’s arms. Then I said, “will you begin that kind of thing with girls? Do you think that it’s nice when you speak harshly to girls?” He said “no teacher”. (Female Teacher, gr. 3, Salamander P)

She said that to base the classroom discussion upon the learners’ experiences was a good opportunity to address gender issues, especially to challenge the attitudes and practice of gender roles that the learners saw at home. One of the teachers at Salamander Primary had also engaged a classroom discussion with the learners about gender-based violence, where the learners’ homework for that day was to tell her the next day whether they had been catcalled after going home from school. Fifteen of the girls had raised their hand the next day. This serves as an example of how the teacher build upon the learners’ experiences in the discussion.

Some teachers at other schools brought up the importance of discussing the topics of the curriculum in relation to the learners’ own contexts and environments as well. Also among the teachers who mentioned the importance of communicating with- and knowing the learners in order to be able to address gender issues, was the grade 1 teacher at Eland Primary. She said that her class sits down every morning to speak about what’s going on in their lives:

So every morning we would have our news and we will have our talks and in grade 1, they say it all. You hear them say things like “my mommy got hit this morning”. (Female Teacher, grade 1, Eland P)

This teacher argued that these issues emerged regularly in everyday discussions, not only when they spoke about topics related to gender in Life Skills. She stated that she had to address such issues accordingly, depending on the severity of what the learners told her. Through this communication with her learners, she decided which topics they needed to learn about, such as respect for others and gender-based violence.

One of the female teachers at Lion Primary underlined how these issues must be addressed in a sensitive way due to the learners’ home backgrounds. She spoke about how she tried not to

justify the ‘wrong-doings’ of the parents, but rather speak openly in class about why these things happen and create a safe space where the learners could share their experiences, with the teacher or with the other learners in the classroom (Female Teacher, gr. 2, Lion P).

#### ***5.2.2.2 Lesson on Gender Equality – Bill of Rights and Safety (for girls)***

In one of the classroom observations in grade 6 at Lion Primary, the female teacher had prepared a lesson on gender equality where group discussion was the main method.

The lesson combined several elements of discussion. First, the teacher posed questions related to gender-based challenges, which the learners discussed in groups of four. Secondly, the groups made mindmaps on gender-equality where they were told to write down what a gender equal society would look like (See Appendix F). Following this, the groups presented what they had written and they made a combined mindmap on the blackboard. The discussion evolved around what they thought about the status of gender equality in South Africa, but also how they could do something about the inequalities. The lesson was summed up by reading loud from the textbook in Life Skills about gender equality and the *Bill of Rights*.

As this was during the time of the gender-based violence protests in Cape Town, one of the main elements of the discussion was related to safety for women and children. As mentioned in section 5.1.2, several of the learners expressed in this class-discussion that women must be protected by men. However, by addressing this as a group-discussion, the teacher was able to lead the learners to the information from the textbook, with a particular focus on equality under the Bill of Rights:

Teacher: Are men protected by the same rights as women?

Boy-learner (1): No!

Boy-learner (2): No, because men can take care of themselves miss, and they can take care of other women

Teacher: Ok, some people think that men are strong enough to take care of themselves, but what did we read on the bill of rights? What does it say?

Boy-learner (2): Miss, they don't have the same rights because they are the ones who mostly do these things to women, so women are being more protected.

Teacher: Ok. I'm going to tell you now, it's a lie. Everybody has the same right. There is no right saying girls must cook more than men. There is no right that says boys must kick a ball

more than girls. Everybody's right is equal to the other person. There isn't a right that says girls are more protected.

(Observation, gr. 6, Lion P)

At this point, the focus of the discussion shifted to how the girls should dress properly, and how learners must go home after school and stay with a grown-up who they trust (Observations 12/09, gr. 6, Lion P). The teacher asked the learners about how they could respect their bodies. Several learners said that they should dress properly. However, the examples provided by the teacher was focused on how girls should dress properly, not taking boys into consideration:

Teacher: You must **always** by all means try to dress up in a way that is respecting your body. I love wearing shorts, but I don't go for bum-shorts, I go for shorts that goes up until my knees and then I go to the beach. And I am not going to wear a shorts where I show my bum, because sometimes **that is how other people are being raped**. (Observation, gr. 6, Lion P)

In the interview with this teacher, I asked her to amplify this focus on girls. She answered that she found it important to focus on the safety for all the learners, not only the girls:

We are trying to protect everybody, mostly the girls, but it shouldn't be like that. I told my boys, what we see outside now, it's for women and children, especially girls, but it can happen to boys as well. Walking at night, you can get robbed, you can get killed and people can do things to you that you don't want. It's not only about the girls. If I have a boy and a girl in my home, it's not about the raping of girls, I'm going to keep my girl here, it doesn't mean your boy is safe out there. (*Female Teacher, gr. 6, Lion P*)

Her answer in the interview contrasted somewhat to what I had observed in the classroom, which showed some ambivalence. In a society where women and girls are victims of gender-based violence and abuse, this is the teacher's pragmatic attempt to protect her learners as best she can. This is an important note for further discussion in section 6.2.3.

### ***5.2.3 Practical Lessons- and Demonstrations***

As mentioned, the national protests against gender-based violence and abuse was ongoing during the last weeks of my fieldwork. Every day for a whole week I passed several schools where children were lined up outside with posters along the road. At the case schools, all the

teachers I interviewed during this time had organized lessons where they discussed gender-based violence and abuse with the learners in class. Several teachers had also engaged the learners to contribute to the protests by making posters to show their solidarity with women.

When I asked the teachers if they normally would arrange practical lessons related to other gender-based challenges, a few of the teachers said that they tried to. One of the female teachers at Mouse Primary mentioned that she had practiced role-play in her class related to the safety for girls;

I kept the girls in my class and I made them say no. I made them shout it out and we role-played and we said this is what I'll do when I'm in that situation, how I need to say no. I don't know if all of them realizes what to do in those situations. (Female Teacher, gr. 4, Mouse P)

She said she got the idea after one of the girls in her class said that a man had been stalking her at home, saying he was going to get to her, and the learner didn't know what to do. Through the role-play the children were physically able to express and practice how they could say no in such situations. This teacher underlined the need for the children to practice the things they learn in theory, in order to be able to internalize it (Female Teacher, gr. 5, Mouse P).

The female teacher in grade 2 at Lion Primary had prepared a lesson on gender equality for the learners, including role-play followed by a class-discussion. The first part of the lesson focused on equal pay for women and men. One boy learner and one girl learner were chosen to come up to the front of the classroom. The teacher dropped a box of bricks on the floor and asked both of them to pick up. When they finished picking them up, the teacher went to her desk to get four pieces of candy. However, instead of giving them equal amount of candy, she gave three pieces to the boy and one to the girl. The girl was happy at first, but when she realized the boy had gotten more candy than her. The fading smile on her face indicated that she didn't approve, although she didn't say anything. The boy was the one that said it was unfair. The teacher asked the rest of the learners whether they thought it was unfair or not, and several said it was fair. The teacher then asked the ones who thought it was unfair to say why. One of them said that they did the same job, but the girl got less candy. The teacher continued the lesson by saying that in South Africa and other countries, many women are paid less for doing the exact same job as men. They had a discussion on whether they thought that

girls and boys are treated equally in South Africa. The majority of the class said that boys and girls are treated differently:

- Teacher: How are they treated different?
  - Girl-learner (1): The boys get everything
  - Boy-Learner (1): Men have all the money and the things
  - Girl-learner (2): Because the men are taking care of the women
  - Teacher: Why are they treated different?
  - Several learners: Boss pays more to men
  - Girl-learner (1): The man is like a boss
  - Teacher: Are boys better than girls?
  - Learners': No! (*some learners are giggling*)
  - Teacher: Can men do the same thing as women?
  - Learners': Yes and no (*Some say yes, some say no*)
  - Teacher: Are men and women treated the same?
  - Girl-learner (3): NO! (*loudly*)
  - Learners': Yes and no (*Some say yes, some say no*)
  - Teacher: But we are different: How are we different?
  - Learners: (*Silent*)
  - Teacher: Are boys and girls treated differently in class?
  - Learners' (majority): YES! (*loudly*)
  - Teacher: Do you get the same punishment? If a girl hits a boy, she also gets lines, she has to say she's sorry, stay inside, get a lot of school work.
  - Boy-learner (2): If a boy hits a girl, he is sent to office, they have to sort it out, apologize.
- (Observation 10/09, gr. 2, Lion P)

This extract from the observation shows that there were several parts where the teacher did not follow up the answers from the children. Rather she proceeded to asking more questions. In the second part of the lesson she focused on challenging the learners' view of stereotypical gender roles and representation in occupation, which will be presented in sub-section 5.2.4.2 Role modeling the non-stereotypical.

#### ***5.2.4 Challenging Underlying Gender Norms***

Several teachers said that addressing gender-based challenges was not limited to subject-learning in LS/LO or any other subject, but something they frequently dealt with in their

practice. The following two sub-sections presents how some of the teachers attempted to challenge the underlying gender norms.

#### ***5.2.4.1 Task-allocation***

At all the schools, the children had to line up outside their classrooms before entering the class, usually divided into a boy line and a girl line. Several of the teachers mentioned that traditionally the girls always entered the classroom first. However, this practice was something that a majority of the teachers had started to change where the boys could enter first as well. Although they mentioned this as a simple thing, some of them also highlighted the importance of such actions to challenge the gender roles and gender norms (as presented in 5.1.2).

Additionally, some of the teachers said that they tried to vary which tasks they gave the learners to challenge the typical gender norms of which tasks girls and boys should do. One of the female teachers at Eland Primary said that the girls were usually more helpful and disposable for the teacher:

This year, the department has themes for every month. This particular August, the theme is cleanliness. So now I'm really making a point out of it, everybody needs to pick up, not only the girls. Everybody needs to sweep. Even with the recycling. I don't only ask the boys to empty the bin, because I had a brother that was only the bin boy, and all the girls needed to do all the chores in the house and that used to bother me. So, in my class it's not just girls that do this, but I see the patterns in the other classes. I try to kick the wheel sometimes, make it stop spinning. (Female Teacher, gr. 1, Eland P)

However, this was not something every teacher did. One of the male teachers at Mouse Primary was asked what he thought was the most challenging part of addressing gender issues. He said when he thought about it, he might in fact be promoting inequality due to how he delegated tasks:

I don't think I do it explicitly where I say boys are stronger, girls are weaker. But you kind of imply as a teacher that boys are stronger. If anything needs to be carried, I ask my boys to do it. Not because I think boys are better but because boys are stronger, because they got this testosterone and all of that. If money has to be counted or if an admin task must be done, I usually ask a girl because I notice that they are just better at it and they are more responsible

than boys at this age. So, I think the stereotypes exist because there is some truth to it. (Male Teacher, gr. 7, Mouse P)

This teacher suggests there is “some truth” to the stereotypes we have towards gender. This is an additional finding on how the teachers’ background also form their attitudes and practice towards gender. It also shows the importance of teachers adapting a gender-sensitive approach that permeates their teaching practice, beyond the curriculum. Although themes and topics on gender might be integrated in the curriculum to some extent, the role teachers play in modeling stereotypical attitudes is crucial to address.

#### ***5.2.4.2 Giving Visibility to Non-stereotypical Role Models***

A few of the teachers attempted to challenge the learners’ mindset of stereotypical gender roles by giving voice and visibility to non-stereotypical gender roles.

At Salamander Primary, one of the female teachers explained how she liked to include gender topics into the literature she chose for English class. She would have novels about South African women in power, and had discussions after the learners had read them. Additionally, she included it in the arts. She had several art works in her class made by South African women. In her class, she tried to focus on promoting women in power to show the girls in her class that they can also achieve big things in life (Female Teacher, gr. 7, Salamander P).

As mentioned, the second part of the observation in grade 2 at Lion Primary focused on how the teacher challenged the stereotypical gender roles and representation in occupations. The teacher started by asking the learners what they wanted to be when they grew up. The majority of the boys said they wanted to be a firefighter, soldier or a principal, while many of the girls said they wanted to become a teacher or a nurse. The teacher further asked them to imagine what they would draw if they were to draw a soldier, a nurse, a doctor, a firefighter and a teacher. The majority of the children said they would draw a soldier, a doctor and a firefighter as a man, while a nurse and a teacher as a woman. Following this, the teacher showed the children pictures of the opposite gender in the occupation. One of the boys who said he wanted to become a soldier couldn’t believe his eyes when he saw a woman as a soldier. When the teacher showed a picture of female firefighters, one of the girls which had been very eager throughout the lesson bounced up on her feet and started clapping her hands (*Observation 10/09, gr. 2, Lion P*).

In the interview I had with this teacher, she said that she used to work as an engineer and had experienced getting less salary than men, which was one of the reasons why she addressed this in her class. She also emphasized the importance of breaking down the gender stereotypes of what the learners think they can hold as a future occupation.

### ***5.2.5 Attempting to Address Boys' Acts of Violence***

As presented in section 5.1.4, several teachers described the challenge of boys being physically violent towards girls, and being disrespectful to other learners and teachers. I was curious to find out how they addressed such behavior. Several teachers mentioned a value-driven campaign initiated by the DoE, with a focus on how teachers could work on installing proper values among the learners, as described below;

The lack of values is such a big problem so they are trying to install values, this whole thing is a value-driven campaign if you put it that way. That's what they are giving to the teachers, teachers must run it down into our learners because they don't know what caring is, just like normal caring. Or trustworthiness, those core values which are totally gone in our society.  
(Female Teacher, gr. 5, Eland P)

It can be regarded as progressive that the Department takes action to address these challenges. However, one might question the major responsibilities imposed on the teachers to install these values. In order to adequately address gender-based violence, the attitudes and approaches of this value-driven campaign should permeate the school system as a whole. One of the teachers at Mouse Primary expressed frustration towards how gender-based violence was dealt with at the school;

I remember one day when one of my girls was sitting in a corner and this boy was just kicking her, like so violently. Now that is something where I thought "suspension!" or you know, this is a red flag, but it just blurs over. We just carry on to the next day and in fact they are just taken out of the classroom for an hour and then they're back. With all this violence against women and children, we should have this zero tolerance policy. We're not doing anything to break the cycle of abuse, of sexual abuse, of physical abuse, of verbal abuse. That same child who got away with it yesterday does the same tomorrow and the next day. (Female Teacher, gr. 5, Mouse P)



This teacher felt that there were no constructive sanctions towards such violent behavior. She also stated that the teachers were not coping with these challenges;

It happens so often and so frequently that it's almost become a part of the being at the school. It's just something you have to deal with and manage, and no, the teachers are not coping. Everybody is just surviving. (Female Teacher, gr. 5, Mouse P)

As presented in section 5.1.4, the teacher in grade 7 at Salamander Primary had two boys in class who were particularly violent and disrupting the class;

He practically doesn't come to school. But he is a terror, so when he comes to school he'll walk down the roads smoking to school. He gets to school, he's not dressed, he'll swear at the principal and be sent back home so it's like, how now? What do you do with that boy? (Female Teacher, gr. 7, Salamander P)

At the time of the interview, one of them had been absent for 20 days, and the other for 40 days, which also included several suspensions. When I asked the teacher how she addressed their behavior in class, she said it was challenging, but that they had both been suspended several times. She also said that she focused on the behavior of the rest of the class, so they wouldn't react to the behavior of these boys:

He comes in, he will work for two days and then he can't. He cannot handle the structure in my class. He doesn't understand why everyone isn't the way they used to be and it really bothers him so he will throw the chairs around because he just can't. So he tries to rally them up but because I've, we've worked very hard to set a precedent in class, they don't react to that anymore. If you wanna perform, no problem, get it out of your system but we're not going to react to it. And it frustrates him even more, hence today he's not here. He didn't get his way so he's not going to bother coming in. (Female Teacher, gr. 7, Salamander P)

She had also tried calling in the parents several times, and the vice principal had knocked on their door to bring them to the school for a meeting. Based on her statements and the circumstances, I sensed that she had given up:

With regards to him, his parents have been called in for ja, lots. But nothing gets done, so right now I'm at a point where "you're well aware of what your son has done". Unfortunately for him, it makes our life and the lives of my children in my class, the 32 others, a bit better

and more bearable if he's not here so I'm not going to chase up on that one because I have already so I'm done. (Female Teacher, gr. 7, Salamander P)

Not only does this statement show that she has given up, it also gives the impression that the caretakers have given up as well. The findings in this section might indicate that there lies a major responsibility on the teachers for addressing learners who tend to violence. At Salamander Primary, this behavior could be sanctioned with suspension. However, the statement from the teacher at Mouse Primary indicated that violent behavior is not sanctioned in this same manner, which shows how the schools address violent behavior differently. This will be further discussed in chapter 6.

The next sub-chapter will present the practical and pedagogical challenges of addressing gender, as voiced by the teachers.

### **5.3 Practical and Pedagogical Challenges of Addressing Gender-Based Challenges**

In order to broaden my understanding of the gender-based challenges, I was curious to get the teachers' opinions of what they experienced as challenges in addressing these issues. The main findings suggested that the challenges related to both the background of the learners and the educational structures. The challenges related to the background of learners included conflict in attitudes, perceptions and practice towards gender between home and school. Also, as mentioned in the presentation of the schools (chapter 3), all the schools were situated in communities affected by gangsterism, crime, safety-issues and poverty. Several teachers emphasized this as a challenge for their work on gender equality since these community surroundings also involved negative role models for the learners.

The first and second section will present the challenges related to the background of the learners: 5.3.1 Home and school: contradicting attitudes towards gender, 5.3.2 Community Surroundings – gangsterism, alcoholism and poverty. The following two sections will present the experienced challenges related to the teachers capacity to address the challenges: 5.3.3 Time pressure and 5.3.4 Lack of competence to address gender-based challenges.

### ***5.3.1 Home and School: Contradicting Attitudes towards Gender***

The most common answer among the teachers to the question about what was the most challenging in addressing gender issues, was the conflicting attitudes towards gender between the school and the home/community. Several of them said that the schools' and the teachers' efforts towards addressing gender-based challenges could not be isolated from attitudes held in the communities and families which the children live in (described in section 5.1.1), as exemplified below;

I think the biggest challenge is to cooperate with the homes on installing these values. Because remember, it all begins at home so if at home they never taught you about respect, for me to take you from the ground to teach you about it and modelling to you is going to be difficult. The learners are not staying with me 24/7. After school, they are at home and if these values are not practiced at home then it's difficult for the children. I think a child learns when something is repeated more than once. (Female Teacher, gr. 6, Lion P)

One of the female teachers at Lion Primary had a similar statement. I asked her if the gender norms in school were in contrast to the home. She stated that the learners grow up with certain expectations towards gender roles and norms, which might contrast to what they are promoting in school;

There definitely is contrast to the home background. It is different in their homes, so it does confuse them. In my class I want to push it as much as I can, but the example is not what I'm preaching so that is a contrast. And if their parents are of a certain culture, they will maybe ridicule them. If I say to the boys try and keep your anger to yourself, go shout or kick a ball and don't hit the girls, but then it's happening in their home and they will be called names. They can be saying that you're not strong enough, you're not a man, you know that bias of 'men don't cry'. That is very much prevalent, and men don't have feelings and they can't express their feelings in an appropriate manner so that is definitely still prevalent. (Female Teacher, gr. 4, Lion P)

As has been noted in previous chapters, the boys are influenced by expectations of fulfilling a masculine role, which is underlined in this quote by stating that "men don't cry" and "you're not strong enough, you're not a man".

In the interview I had with the male teacher at Eland Primary, he explained the issue of assimilation where children to a large extent adapt to the gender roles and norms they see at home and in the community:

I think it's a challenge to speak about certain things, because I can be promoting gender equality, but the young boys or girls could be in a home where gender equality isn't being promoted. And I think a big thing that we forget about when we focus on this is that in the schools and in society and in culture, people assimilate. So, they assimilate to what they see at home and I think that is one of the biggest problems that we still have in our society. (Male Teacher, gr. 6, Eland P)

When I asked the teachers how the values differed between the school and the homes, several teachers referred to how the social expectations towards gender roles played out in the homes, as described in 5.1.1.2. The most commonly mentioned value lacking was respect, as suggested by one of the female teachers at Salamander Primary:

There is a definite clash between the home and the school values. I'm going to teach my boys about respect, how to respect women, how to respect each other, how to respect the self. And then they step outside and they are going to find their caregivers, their guardians, whomever that is, being mom, dad, grandpa, grandma, uncle, auntie, whomever and they are going to be sworn at and they are going to be treated like rubbish. (Female Teacher, gr. 7, Salamander P)

One of the male teachers at Mouse Primary had similar experiences to this. He spoke about how challenging it is to change a child's mindset, realizing they see gender-based violence at home:

The learners see it at home. The parents, their mom is being abused maybe. For instance, there is a 13-year old girl in grade 7, her boyfriend is about 20. The boyfriend hits her, she allows it, why? She sees it at home. She thinks it's right because that's what she grew up with. I think it's very difficult to change someone's attitude or mindset because they see the right thing at school for seven hours, but the rest of the day they are at home and they see the wrong thing. (Male Teacher, gr. 7, Mouse P)

This teacher explained how these values and stereotypes are passed down from generation to generation, making it a continuous cycle that is difficult to break out of.

### ***5.3.1.1 Parent Cooperation***

When asked how the teachers could work towards a solution to these challenges, several of the teachers said that it seemed hopeless, while others said that they were continuously working on engaging the parents in what was happening in the schools.

At Salamander Primary and Mouse Primary, I sensed a feeling of hopelessness among the teachers in terms of cooperating with the parents. When I asked why they thought some parents did not get involved, they said that the parents often had other problems to deal with than their child at school:

Although this might be an excuse, the parents don't get involved because they themselves have so much to do and it's only mom home. Dad is somewhere else, and we don't know where and she needs to be the breadwinner, the caregiver, she needs to be every single thing.

*(Female Teacher, gr. 7, Salamander P)*

At Lion Primary, the teachers said that previously the parents only were called when their child had done something wrong and meeting with the parents was necessary. They explained how this often resulted in a negative cycle, particularly for the parents of the learners who were struggling or performed “deviant” behavior such as violence and disrespecting other learners and teachers. These parents often “gave up” on their children and stopped coming to meetings called upon because their child had done something “wrong” again. However, the school leadership, in cooperation with the teachers, were trying to shift this attitude by inviting the parents to ‘fun’ events such as concerts and celebrations, or just to have a cup of tea and some food. This way the parents could come and see the positive things that are happening at the schools. During these events, the teachers and the school leadership could also integrate what they are working with at the schools in terms of values and interventions. The teachers said that this had mobilized more parents and grandparents to come and get involved in a positive way (Interviews, Lion P). This might be regarded as a starting point of cooperating with parents, particularly when considering the challenging community surroundings, as I will describe in the next section.

### ***5.3.2 Community Surroundings – Gangsterism, Alcoholism and Poverty***

The majority of teachers painted a picture of home backgrounds and a community where there were several negative factors influencing the children, such as gangsterism, drugs, alcoholism, poor socioeconomic conditions and parental neglect:

We have a lot of violence, a lot of unemployment, gangsterism, drug abuse, like for instance if I'm in class, the children will tell me "miss do you smell the drugs, they're smoking drugs", so even the smell comes into our class. That's how close the community is to the school.

(Female Teacher, gr. 2, Lion P)

A lot of poverty, lot of neglect. Also, obviously the gun violence has rocked the community. There's crime, gang-violence, there is a lot of people being mugged on their way to work. People from the community are the targets. I mean, there's been some child-killings, you know stray bullets and so on. A lot of neglect amongst the learners, but also some very interested parents. So, as I said, the divide. And a lot of children are actually catered for by their grandmothers. (Female Teacher, gr.5, Mouse P)

In the interview with the female teacher in grade 5 at Mouse Primary, she told me that it was a divided community. She said that the parents with better socioeconomic backgrounds were more involved with their children at school, and vice versa. At all the schools, teachers pointed out how poor socioeconomic conditions of the family negatively influenced the learners. This was exemplified by parents working long hours, leaving the children to themselves, parents who neglect their children and/or do drugs, grandparents who have taken the role as caregivers, fathers that had left the families, fathers that were trapped in alcoholism or involved in crime and gangsterism. One of the teachers at Lion Primary gave an example of one of her learners coming from a challenging background;

This one boy, he fights all the time with the girls. So, for example, on Monday he didn't come, so I said I'm going to need to phone your mommy because you're not allowed to stay out so much. So I said, are you staying at home alone? He said no, my mommy was too drunk, and she couldn't wake up. She couldn't put my lunch in, so she said just stay at home.

It's normal. (Female Teacher, gr. 2, Lion P)

At every school, teachers explained how the gangsterism in the communities affected them and the children. Amongst the factors that affected them, they mentioned shootings,

sometimes daily, in the community. Several of the teachers also said that some of their learners either were involved in gangs or had relatives who were part of the gangs in the community. Especially at Mouse Primary and Lion Primary, the teachers worried about the safety of the learners. Although they said that the most common duty when being enrolled in a gang for the children was ‘only’ to deliver and pick-up drugs for money, they worried about the future for these kids as the gangsters provide them with things they don’t have at home: a form of ‘safety’, ‘family’, and money:

Well, usually the home circles aren't good, so they (the children) are always on the street and the gangsters identify them and they see that they are weak and vulnerable, that they don't have anything. Gangsters make it look appealing to them and they just fall in the practice, because the gangsters provide shoes for them, clothes, even alcohol in grade 7, drugs. And all they have to do is to do what the boss says. (Male Teacher, gr. 7, Mouse P)

This quote also underlines how the children from worse socioeconomic conditions are more in risk of being enrolled in gangs. The influence of, and research on this deserve far more attention than I am able to give in this thesis. However, in relation to the presented gender-based challenges in the schools, several teachers said that these backgrounds and factors influencing the children are additional challenges, when trying to promote positive values towards gender equality:

So, I think that the school, they are like a plaster, they can only put a plaster over the problem, but that problem is still going to be there. The home circumstances need to change if you want the learners to change, if you want the gangsterism to stop. The whole circumstance needs to stop and how does it change? Government intervention. Jobs, better houses, safety. (Male Teacher, gr. 7, Mouse P)

These findings emphasize how socioeconomic conditions impact the lives of the families, and the ability of parents to take properly care of their children. This might be a reflection of the inequalities of South Africa as a whole, shedding light to how these inequalities affect the lives of the children. This will be discussed further in chapter 6.

### ***5.3.3 Time Pressure***

Several teachers mentioned how they were pressured for time due to the amount of workload for teachers and learners. One of the teachers at Salamander Primary argued that the amount of assessments was a major challenge as this meant she had to rush through the content of the curriculum without being sure that the learners had understood the content;

(...) All these assessments! Basically, you're teaching a concept and then you're assessing that. Doing three or four assessments in one go. The amount of work that the children have to complete, it's too much. Because if they don't understand a concept, I cannot stay on it, I must move on, which makes no sense. (Female Teacher, gr. 6, Salamander P)

Additionally, several teachers mentioned the lack of time allocated to LS/LO as a subject. As this was found to be the subject mainly including topics on gender, several teachers found it problematic that they had to rush through these topics. At Lion Primary, the male teacher argued that the lack of time in combination with forty learners in one class was a challenge of adequately addressing gender issues:

Remember, intervention seldom works if you apply it to a group. Intervention is more effective if you have a one-on-one, but we can't have a one-on-one because there is simply no time because there are forty others that I need to spend the time with. So, generally speaking you need to get through your curriculum, hoping and thinking that the curriculum, like Life Skills, addresses those challenges of behavior within the learner. (Male Teacher, gr. 5, Lion P)

One of the teachers at Lion Primary explained that the lack of time allocated to the subject was due to the changes in the curriculum the past years. She exemplified by saying that now the general curriculum focuses more on Math than Life Skills, in addition to more content in each subject, while still having the same time frame as before:

It's all about content and quantity as opposed to quality. I remember before, it was less content, so we had time to reinforce and consolidate and then the learners in the end were better for it because we had the time to spend. (Female Teacher, gr. 4, Lion P)

However, one of the teachers at Lion Primary had a different approach as she argued that it is in the hands of the teachers to make the time for the subject:



If you make time, there is time for it. There would never be time if you don't make up for it yourself. I would say it's never enough because these children have so much to tell you and some of the things are sensitive. (Female Teacher, gr. 6, Lion P)

These statements suggest that the majority of teachers feel pressured for time in terms of assessing and getting through the curriculum, which might prevent an emphasis on addressing topics related to gender. In addition to the time pressure, several teachers stated that they didn't feel capable to address some of the gender-based challenges in terms of knowledge and pedagogical tools, which will be presented in the following section.

### ***5.3.4 Lack of Competence to address Gender-based Challenges***

In the interviews I had with the teachers, I asked them what they had learnt about pedagogics related to gender issues. The majority of them said that in their teacher education- and training, the main focus is on subject-learning and general pedagogics. Some described it as a shock to start in their first job teaching and did not feel prepared for what they met in the everyday reality.

Several teachers reported that they did not feel they had the competence to address a range of challenges in class, such as gender-based violence and disrespectful attitudes towards learners and teachers. One of the teachers in Salamander Primary thought the teachers' education should be updated due to the fact that the pedagogics and topics they learn are not relevant to the society they live in today:

Discipline procedures are taught to you while you are studying, but it's theoretical. Homework isn't the biggest issue. It should be: what if a child in your class is addicted to drugs? What if a child abuses you? Or abuses another child? So, it's (*the teachers' education*) based on theories that have been implemented from years ago that's not relevant anymore, because our culture has changed, the communities we are in has changed. It's not the same child like you were teaching twenty years ago. (Female Teacher, gr. 6, Salamander P)

In the interview with one of the female teachers at Eland Primary, she told me that she spent a lot of time dealing with other issues in class such as settling the class, making them

concentrate, but also issues of fighting and attitude. In this sense, she felt that the DoE had failed them:

I actually strongly feel that the Department of Education failed us in that sense. I feel that psychology should have been a major. Because really, what you have to deal with and the amount of children. And as a teacher you have to first look after yourself when you step into that classroom. Because I could have been abused, I could have been gang-raped and these children they come to you with these attitudes and how are you going to deal with that?  
(Female Teacher, gr. 5, Eland P)

She spoke about how she felt that she wasn't capable to deal with these issues and how this could make her feel like losing control;

It becomes difficult, teachers shout, but still you are the adult and you think that ok, maybe I shouldn't have lost it. Maybe the child has their own problems. (Female Teacher, gr. 5, Eland P)

These findings show that several teachers feel powerless in dealing with the range of challenges in the classroom. It also indicates that the teacher education does not provide teachers with the tools they need for addressing gender-based challenges.

## **5.4 Summary of Findings**

As mentioned, the original aim of this research was to compare and contrast the findings from schools situated in similar socioeconomic contexts. However, the analysis of the findings made me realize that there were only small deviations between the case schools regarding their challenges related to gender, which led me to the reflection of generalizing similar patterns between the case schools (see 3.1, refer Flyvbjerg). The following three sections sum up the main findings in thematically order.

### ***5.4.1 Gender-based Challenges***

In sum, the perceptions of gender roles in society as presented by the informants, points to a society where rigid social expectations towards gender roles are still prevalent and serves as an obstacle for gender equality as women are still to a large extent seen as inferior to men.

The description of these gender roles as visible and/or expressed in the schools revealed great similarities to the perceptions of gender roles in the communities. The teachers described how the learners' expectations towards gender roles played out in their perception of "boy-tasks" and "girl-tasks", the focus on safety for girls and the boys as masculine protectors, as well as the learners' attitudes towards teachers and each other. Male teachers were more respected.

Learners who didn't conform to the stereotypes of gender roles were often victims of bullying. Additionally, several teachers explained how the expectations of the masculine role of boys became a gender-based challenge in terms of the violence performed by boys, often towards girls. For girls, there seemed to be higher expectations towards how they perform in school, which pointed to an academic gap between girls and boys.

#### ***5.4.2 Teachers' Approaches to Gender-based Challenges***

There was not necessarily a common perspective among the teachers on whether the curriculum of LS/LO addressed topics related to the gender-based challenges. Some said that it *does* address relevant topics, others said that it is not addressed in depth, while one teacher revealed that these topics are not prioritized. This can be problematic since this is the learning area specifically including topics related to gender.

The pedagogical approaches to gender-based challenges varied depending on the teacher. Dialogue based on the learners' experiences was sometimes used to approach the gender-based challenges, such as gender-based violence in the home and the division of gender roles. A few teachers addressed these topics in the form of practical lessons and demonstrations, including poster-making, role-play and art work. Additionally, several teachers attempted to challenge the underlying gender norms and roles by trying to not let gender decide who was given which task and giving visibility to "non-stereotypical" role models such as women in power.

There are several positive tendencies among many of the teacher in their work towards addressing gender-based challenges. However, it also became evident that they were struggling to address violent behavior among boy learners, which will be further discussed in section 6.2.4.

A commonality among the teachers who are represented in this sub-chapter was their dedication to address gender-based challenges in their classrooms. A particular interesting finding is that the teachers who went beyond learning from books and sometimes regardless of what was stated in the curriculum, were mainly women. Additionally, all of these women had shared personal stories with me about how they in some way had been treated unequal due to being females (Interviews). These examples of engaged teaching stood in contrast to other teachers I interviewed where they said that they solely discussed the gendered topics in class as it was stated in the curriculum. The findings indicate that female teachers address these topics to a larger extent than male teachers, and seem to be more dedicated to doing so.

### ***5.4.3 Practical and Pedagogical Challenges of Addressing Gender-Based Challenges***

The most commonly mentioned challenge was described as a conflict between the home and the school regarding gender values. This was seen as a contrast in perceptions, attitudes and the practice of gender in the homes. Several learners see gender-based violence at home, as well as a divide in gender roles where boys and men are expected to be the strong, masculine protector, while girls are expected to do well in school and stay inside. The teachers said that it was a challenge to change the learners' perceptions and attitudes regarding gender roles from the homes.

Secondly, the challenges the communities face in terms of crime, drug abuse, gangsterism, alcoholism and poverty must be considered when comprehending the teachers' role in the classrooms. This means that they face additional challenges to gender, where the gender-based challenges might increase due to these factors. For boys living in a community where several male figures are involved in crime and gangsterism and/or use alcohol and drugs, this is an additional risk factor for enforcing the expectations of a masculine role where one might be labelled as "weak" if one doesn't adapt that same masculine role. For girls surrounded by a society where they are labelled as weak and in need of protection, this doesn't necessarily alter the situation of gender-based violence. The intersections of these challenges will be discussed further in chapter 6.

Finally, the teachers experienced a lack of time combined with a heavy workload and pressure for assessing the learners as an obstacle for addressing the gender-based challenges.

Additionally, several of them reported that they didn't feel they had the knowledge or capacity to deal with a range of these challenges. This was also the case in dealing with violent behavior among boys. In this regard, several of them expressed a sense of hopelessness. This is particularly problematic when teachers are portrayed as the drivers for change.

## 6. Discussion

This chapter presents a discussion of my empirical data with reference to the theoretical framework presented in chapter 3, as well as the background and relevant literature reviewed in chapter 1 and 2. The following sub-chapters will be structured according to the main findings of the research, aligned with the thematical order of the research questions.

- 1) *What are the current gender-based challenges in the case schools?*
- 2) *To what extent and in what ways are teachers addressing gender-based challenges in the classrooms?*
- 3) *To what extent does addressing gender-based challenges cause pedagogical and practical challenges in teaching and learning?*

The first sub-chapter will discuss the findings to the first research question within the concept of gender as a social construction. The gender-based challenges will also be discussed within a socialization framework, exploring how various socialization actors play a key role in constructing gender identities and expectations towards gender roles among the learners in the case schools.

The findings to the second and the third research question revealed that these are closely interlinked, and the second sub-chapter will therefore include a discussion of both. The findings to research question two will mainly be discussed within the pedagogical framework presented, namely a pedagogy for transformative learning and critical thinking by Paulo Freire and bell hooks.

### 6.1 Gender-based Challenges in the Schools

The majority of informants described a society where gender-based challenges are obstacles for reaching gender equality. The informants from the organizations in the research painted a picture of a patriarchal South Africa, and argued that perceiving males as superior to females is problematic, also in schools. The majority of the teachers I interviewed presented a similar perception of South Africa as a whole and of the communities surrounding the schools.

Based on my findings, the gender-based challenges described in schools were closely linked to the overall patriarchal pattern of gender norms and roles in the general society. According

to Oyěwùmí (1997), gender is described as patterns of expectations towards individuals based on their gender, which in turn affects the everyday life of the learners. The findings point out how these expectations towards gender roles and norms were visible among the learners in the schools. By use of socialization theories and the concept of gender as socially constructed, the next sections will explore the link between expectations towards gender roles and norms and the gender-based challenges in schools.

### ***6.1.1. Various Actors influencing the Construction of Gender Identity***

Based on the findings, it was clear that the socialization actors influencing the construction of gender varied from learner to learner depending on their situation at home. A contextualization of the socialization theories used, is therefore necessary before proceeding.

Based on my findings, Berger & Luckmann's (1966) description of the primary socialization as the process in the home with caretakers - "most often the parents" - as the significant others was not necessarily found to be the general pattern in the communities of the case schools. Several of the children spent time with others which could be considered role models and/or significant others, in the community and in their homes, whether it be other family members, peers, and for some of the boy learners, with the gangsters-groups. As presented in the theoretical framework, the time spent in certain spaces also influences the construction of gender identity, as argued by Breidlid and Breidlid (2013), which may also strengthen this argument. Children who spend more time in school and with peers after school, than with their caretakers will more likely be influenced significantly by these spaces, than children who spend more time at home with their caretakers. In this regard, one must view the primary- and secondary socialization process and construction of gender identity and gender roles as complexly influenced by several socialization actors and social processes in the communities and homes of the learners. The patterns of gender roles in the communities must be considered a major contributing factor in the socialization, shaping expectations towards gender roles and norms among the learners.

#### ***6.1.1.1 "You need to be the macho man" – Expectations towards Gender roles***

The teachers described patterns of social expectations towards gender roles within the communities as related to duties, responsibilities and behavior, as well as the imbalanced power relationship between women and men.

As presented in the findings (5.1.2), several teachers and informants from the organizations described the male as expected to take on a “masculine role”, while females are expected to take on “a feminine role”, or in a patriarchal view, the submissive/inferior role. These patterns were pointed out by several teachers as an obstacle to reach gender equality in the larger society, but were also found to be visible in the gendered culture in the schools. Expectations towards what is considered appropriate based on gender is among the factors influencing the gender identity construction (Nomlomo, 2013).

The expectations towards boys and men inheriting the “masculine role”, which also normally included violent behavior, was presented by the majority of the informants. Additionally, men were more respected, had more power and are less subjugated to gender-based discrimination than women. More specifically, the division of duties and responsibility based on gender was visible where women were expected to cater for the household and children, while men were responsible for the income and protection of the family. However, as one of the teachers at Salamander Primary described, several of the fathers are unemployed, sometimes involved with alcoholism, drugs or gangsterism, whereas the mothers’ responsibilities are both the income and the household. This was also aligned with the informant from GALA, who claimed that “The idea that men are the heads of the households is a farce”. This role division might also be linked to the historical context where the Western Cape was designated a “Coloured Labor Preference Area”, where many Coloured women were employed in the local factories. Hence, Coloured women have historically catered for the economical income of the households, and men were more likely to be employed in short-term seasonal jobs.

In the primary socialization, a child will pick up what is considered the “correct” behavior based on the roles and attitudes of their significant others (Berger & Luckmann, 1966). This is hence where the child’s first world is constructed and where they will, among a range of other factors, learn what is considered appropriate behavior based on their gender. As the construction of gender identity is a reflection of the child’s identification with the significant others (Berger & Luckmann, 1966), the child will be likely to identify with one of the caretakers and start to internalize the specific gender role, masculine or feminine, which matches their gender identification.



Considering the descriptions of gender roles in the communities surrounding the case schools, many of the children enter the school with certain perceptions regarding gender roles and norms from their primary socialization (Berger & Luckmann, 1966). My findings were able to give a brief picture of the structure of gender roles in the surrounding communities of the case schools. This I consider as important background knowledge when exploring the gender-based challenges in the schools.

### ***6.1.2 Learners' Attitudes Towards Gender Roles***

The findings from my fieldwork indicated that the perceptions of gender roles among learners in the school were normally closely linked to the perceptions of gender roles in the surrounding communities. As Bhana et al. (2011) argued, the gendered cultures in school are constructed based on the broader social context children come from and the culture at school. The three following sub-sections will discuss the learners' attitudes towards gender roles.

#### ***6.1.2.1 "That's a girl's work" – learners questioning untraditional norms***

If teachers assigned boys for duties which was traditionally considered work "for girls", the boys would argue that this wasn't a task for them. This also happened vice versa, for example if the boys were allowed to enter the classroom before girls, the girls would complain and say that the girls should always go first. This indicates there is a link to the gender roles in the communities, where the learners have preconceived notions of the tasks and duties they are supposed to do based on their gender. I will argue that this shows how the learners are socialized into different gender roles through their primary socialization (Berger & Luckmann, 1966; Nomlomo, 2013).

The attitudes towards gender roles in the communities and families of the learners have implications for how the learners perceive their gender identity and which choices they make based on what they see in their surroundings (Nomlomo, 2013; Breidlid & Breidlid, 2013). As argued by Bhana, et al. (2011), it is important to comprehend the elements that influence the development of gender identity among learners in primary schools. The school is an important socialization arena where learners attach meaning to their gender roles by developing masculine and feminine identities, where gender norms are created, resisted and recreated. For example, the learners in grade 7 at Salamander Primary expected men to protect women, which I will discuss in the following sub-section.

### ***6.1.2.2 “The girls need a boyfriend who can protect them” – the male as the protector***

On basis of my observations and interactions with learners in several classes, many of them expressed knowledge and awareness of gender-based challenges in society. The mindmaps from the observation in grade 7 at Salamander Primary (See Appendix F) revealed that safety issues for girls was mentioned by both boys and girls, which is closely linked to the prevalence of gender-based violence and abuse in the communities. Several learners, regardless of gender, indicated that the solution to these problems was that females should be protected by males.

The idea that females should be protected by males needs to be carefully discussed as this can be viewed from different perspectives. On one hand, one can understand that females need more protection, given the societal context where girls are more subjugated to discrimination, abuse and gender-based violence than boys, as presented in the background chapter, sub-chapter 2.2.

On the other hand, the idea that women need protection also risks a further dichotomization of labelling women as weak/vulnerable and in need of someone to protect them such as a strong, fearless man. This is problematic for several reasons, two of which I will mention. First, this idea of protection can enhance harmful stereotypes leading people to generalize women and girls as oppressed and in need of help, preferably from the “stronger” gender. Secondly, this also enforces stereotypes leading to generalizations and labels of boys and men as strong and fearless, building up under the hegemonic masculinity as referred to by Connell (2005). As Connell (2005) notes, the hegemonic masculinity only exists in contrast with the femininity. A discussion of how the masculine role expected of boys and men poses itself as a prominent gender-based challenge in the schools will follow in section 6.1.4.

### ***6.1.2.3 Attitudes towards teachers – male teachers more respected***

A particularly interesting finding from the schools was how the learners behaved differently towards male and female teachers. The male teachers expressed that they had less challenges with discipline in their classes than the female teachers, where the male teachers at both Lion Primary and Eland Primary specifically linked this to the fact that they were men. On basis of the theory and literature reviewed, I will argue that these attitudes towards female teachers

also has its roots in attitudes towards females in the communities surrounding the schools. This also serves as an example of how the learners are part of reproducing the social structures in which gender is socially constructed by practicing discriminating attitudes towards the female teachers (Morell, 1998).

Additionally, women are largely overrepresented in the lower grades and in primary school in general. As one of the female teachers at Mouse Primary stated, for men to be reading a toddler book for small children deviates from the expectations towards the masculine gender role. I will argue that this is part of reinforcing learners' experiences of gender roles from their home background, where women are expected to cater for the household and the children. To some extent, these elements of the secondary socialization then builds upon the learners' primary socialization, causing a complementary relationship, which Darnell and Hoem (1996) argue is essential for an ideal socialization. However, this is only one element of the socialization process, where the research indicated that there were several conflicts between the home and school socialization, which will be further discussed in sub-chapter 6.2.

### ***6.1.3 Peer Influence - Reinforcing Gender Roles through Stereotypes***

Peers play an important role in the socialization process, and hence the construction of a gender identity (Bhana et.al., 2011; Berger & Luckmann, 1966). The findings show how learners were in risk of being bullied by their peers if they did not conform to the expected role and norm of their gender.

Although it seemed like both genders were subjugated for bullying based on their deviation from the rigid social gender norms, some of the teachers mentioned boys as particularly in risk of being bullied. Linking these findings to the theory of hegemonic masculinity, one can argue that there is little or no room for other masculinities than the hegemonic (Connell, 2005). As Messerschmidt (2005) argues, the hegemonic masculinity is constructed in relation to "subordinated masculinities", which includes homosexuality. The findings show how boys who acted feminine were labelled as '*mofi*' (gay) by their peers, using homosexuality as a way to downplay other masculinities than the hegemonic one. Thus, I will argue that there lies important truth to the point that primary schools have proven to be "*important sites where femininities and masculinities are produced*" (Bhana et al., 2011, p. 444).

#### ***6.1.4 “Boys will be boys” – Patterns of Masculinity in the Schools***

Based on my findings, I would argue that there is a crucial distinction between the expectations male and female learners meet based on their gender. Several of the teachers expressed that girls were among the top-achievers in school. They are specifically told that they have to work hard academically to achieve their future goals. At the same time, some of the teachers argued that the boys are more likely to be excused if they haven't done their homework. The male teacher at Eland Primary stated that there is a saying to this; “Boys will be boys”. In this saying, I will argue that there is an underlying expectation and generalization towards boys as “less” likely to do well in school. This underlines how the interactions and practice in everyday life are part of forming the expectations towards gender roles (Butler, 1990).

Gender-based violence was described as a challenge in three of the four schools, where the teachers argued that this was related to bad role models in the community and what the learners observed in their homes and in the communities where violence in several forms is prominent, including gender-based violence. Connell (2005) argues that challenging the hegemonic masculinity in communities is one of the key factors for addressing violence, when the hegemonic masculinity legitimizes and practices gender-based violence. Several teachers stated that aggressive behavior and violence were challenging to deal with. They reported lack of knowledge and tools to address this. This will be further discussed in section 6.2.4

Within the theory of hegemonic masculinity, I will argue that several of the men in these communities can be labelled within what would be termed sub-ordinate masculinities (Connell, 2005). High rates of unemployment and limited access to labour markets for people in these communities impacts men's ability to serve the role as an economic provider for the family, which deviates from the notion of the hegemonic masculinity. Thus, for many men in these communities, their “share” of access to the benefits of being a man in a patriarchal society are diluted (Morrell, 1998). However, my findings indicate that men in the communities continue to live under the umbrella term “hegemonic masculinity” by demonstrating their power through verbal, physical or sexual abuse (Morrell, 1998).

Constructing a masculine identity where violence is part of solving problems can easily be questioned. However, as several teachers described, using violence was considered essential for the male learners in order to be able to “survive” in communities where gangsters, crime and violence generally thrive. As the female teacher in grade 5 at Mouse primary stated, being “weak” in these communities could potentially be dangerous. Additionally, men grow up in a society that expects them to be protective and potentially aggressive and violent to protect women, which might be a further legitimization of violence. Thus, the construction of a masculine identity among the boys in the case schools cannot be isolated from other crucial contextual factors.

## **6.2 Addressing gender-based challenges in classrooms: Approaches and Challenges**

The findings revealed that the extent to which teachers addressed gender-based challenges in the classroom varied. Several teachers attempted to challenge the underlying gender roles and norms in the daily practice. A few of them, particularly female teachers were engaged in engaging the learners in dialogue and practical lessons related to gender-based challenges and the learners’ life experiences. The next four sections 6.2.1 to 6.2.4 will discuss the teachers’ approaches to the gender-based challenges, as well as the obstacles they face, and explore to what extent they are able to foster reflection and critical thinking related to gender roles through a cooperative teacher-student educative model.

### ***6.2.1 Addressing Gender in the Curriculum– Teacher dependent?***

My findings revealed that several teachers thought that relevant topics and themes related to the gender-based challenges *do* feature in the curriculum of LS/LO. They mentioned relevant topics like; discrimination, stigmatizing, gender equality and information about HIV/AIDS. One might question whether including such topics may foster a sense of hope towards change among the learners. This is problematized by Simmonds (2014) (section 2.3.3) who claimed in her curriculum analysis that the content related to gender equality and empowerment of women is dominated by a pessimistic and adverse tone, which can foster a feeling of apathy and hopelessness, rather than creating a sense of hope towards change. According to Freire

(1977), a sense of hope is required in order to believe in the transformation of an oppressing situation.

On the other hand, there were also teachers who didn't share the same view as the first group, claiming that the curriculum didn't adequately address topics related to gender in depth. This is more in line with Simmonds (2014), as well as Chisholm (2005) who claims that the "(...) *process of ensuring gender equality through the curriculum has been partial, and that major challenges remain (...)*" (Chisholm, 2005, p. 13). My interpretation of the curriculum of Life Skills/Life Orientation, is that the topics apparently addressing gender-based challenges are not adequate for addressing the root causes of the real gender-based challenges.

As presented in the background chapter 2, there seems to exist political will to address gender-based challenges through the curriculum of Life Skills and Life Orientation. And both Chisholm (2005) and Simmonds (2014) agreed that there *does* exist content related to gender equality and empowerment of women in the curriculum. This confirms that the political will to address gender-based challenges through education is reflected to some extent. However, political will and gender themes featured in the curriculum do not necessarily secure that gender-based challenges are discussed in the classrooms.

My findings indicate that the extent to which teachers follow the guidelines of the CAPS-documents varies. Several teachers at Eland Primary and Lion Primary expressed that the CAPS-document was thoroughly used. However, an important finding was the divergent statements regarding the rigidity of the CAPS guidelines. Where some teachers described the curriculum as something to be strictly followed, others expressed that topics within Personal- and Social Well-being (PSWB) (where gender themes feature) wasn't prioritized among the teachers. One of the female teachers at Mouse Primary complained explicit about the neglect of such issues: "*the teachers weren't teaching PSWB, they were just giving the kids the tests at the end of the term.*" This is a crucial finding as PSWB within Life Skills and Life Orientation seems to be where gender topics mainly appear. If the subject and/or learning area PSWB is not prioritized or taught, then the positive notes from Chisholm (2005) and Simmonds (2014) lose relevance.

This must also be considered in relation to the challenge of time pressure. All the teachers indicated that the reality of teaching consisted of a heavy workload, with a major focus on

assessing and evaluating the progress of the learners. Within a pedagogical framework, one might question whether the workload of teachers reflected by the frequency of assessments, meetings and evaluations contributes to a sort of “banking education”, rather than a cooperative teacher-student educative model (Freire, 1970; hooks, 1994). Based on the findings, there seem to be a heavy reliance and craving for accountability which can easily cumulate the education model into an assessment-model, implemented from the top by the Department of Education. One can argue that accountability is important to ensure quality in education, but becomes paradoxical if this accountability might contribute to reduce the quality of education, by minimizing the time for engaging in dialogue and cooperative teaching.

As featured in the findings chapter 5, the focus on addressing gender-based challenges, within and beyond the curriculum, seems to vary with the teacher’s own background and experiences, as well as gender (5.2.4.2 and 5.4.2). There was tendency of female teachers addressing gender-based challenges to a larger extent than male teachers. Based on the interviews and my own reflections one might suggest that this is due to an urge and opportunities as a teacher to contribute to less gender-based inequality that what they have experiences themselves.

### ***6.2.2 “Undoing gender” – Challenging Underlying Gender Norms***

The findings suggest that several teachers approach the gender-based challenges of traditional perceptions and stereotypes towards gender roles by what I will term "doing/undoing gender". As argued by Stromquist & Fischmann (2009), perceptions of gender roles are also formed by the practice of gender, meaning that the division of tasks and responsibilities related to gender roles contributes to the social construction of gender. They further state that teachers and learners in schools can serve as important actors for challenging traditional practices by offering alternative ways of viewing gender. By "undoing gender" in this way, some of the teachers challenge these traditional perceptions through the social practice at school (Stromquist & Fischman, 2009). In the following, I will discuss some of the approaches applied by teachers to challenge the traditional, often patriarchal, perceptions- and stereotypes towards gender roles and norms.

Several teachers said that they challenged these underlying gender norms in different ways. First, some teachers did this by delegating what would be considered a typical "duty for girls" to the boys, and vice versa. One of the male teachers at Eland Primary said that this was sometimes protested by the learners, which also underlines how entrenched these gender norms are.

Aligned with understanding gender as a social construction influenced by interactions and relationships in the learners' environments, I will argue that challenging such gender norms in the social practice at school is crucial. As Bhana et al. (2011) argues, learners in primary school continuously attach and maintain meanings towards gender, since primary schools are important arenas where gender norms are created, resisted and recreated. Thus, teachers act as socialization agents in the schools where they have the potential to challenge the perceptions towards gender roles, by recreating the practice of gender. However, in order to engage in a dialogue regarding these norms, this should also be addressed as a topic for discussion in the classrooms which potentially could enhance critical thinking regarding the traditional gender norms (Freire, 1970; hooks, 1994). This will be further discussed in the next section.

In contrast to the teachers who attempted to "undo gender", one male teacher expressed how he realized that he might be enforcing the traditional gender norms through the delegation of duties and responsibilities in his class. He exemplified this by saying that he normally delegated duties which required "strength", for the boys, while the girls were delegated duties which required responsibility such as administrative tasks. He also said that he thought "*stereotypes exist because there is some truth to it*", namely that boys are considered stronger and girls are considered more responsible. This is a crucial finding that also points out how teachers' background and perceptions of gender norms and roles are influenced by perceptions and attitudes in the communities, which is aligned with the argument by Bhana, et al. (2011). Additionally, this finding also highlights the importance of building a knowledge base for teachers on how to address gender-based challenges in the everyday social practice at school, as well as gender topics in the curriculum (Chisholm, 2005; Simmonds, 2014; UNESCO 2015; Schoeman, 2015).

Secondly, one of the female teachers at Lion Primary had a lesson where she tried to challenge the gender norms and stereotypes related to representation in occupations. From my observation in this class, it was clear that the majority of the learners wanted to work with



what may be considered stereotypical gender occupations, such as boys wanting to become firefighters or soldiers, and girls wanted to become a nurse or a teacher. This can be seen in relation to how gender is socially constructed in the larger society, where the visible structures in society also has an impact on how we comprehend our gender roles (Connell, 2005).

### ***6.2.3 Questioning Gender inequality through contextual Dialogues and Practical Lessons***

The findings revealed that quite a few of the teachers applied dialogue and practical lessons when addressing topics related to gender equality in the classrooms. This section will discuss how these approaches include important elements of fostering critical thinking among the learners by relating discussions to the learners' experiences (6.2.3.1) and how it might be necessary to challenge the values from the home background (6.2.3.2). The last sub-section will discuss whether these approaches contribute to promoting hope, or hopelessness (6.2.3.3).

#### ***6.2.3.1 Relating discussions to the learners' experiences***

Some teachers tried to relate the discussions of topics on gender equality to the learners' backgrounds. Quite a few of the teachers stated that they discussed gender-based violence and abuse in relation to the current protests on these issues in Cape Town at the time. As noted in the findings, gender-based violence is an issue, which several learners observe in their homes. Berger & Luckmann (1970) describes the primary socialization as the phase where a child internalizes norms and values based on what is modelled by the significant others. Linking this to the evident challenge of gender-based violence in the schools, one might argue that several learners have internalized this as the way to act.

On the other hand, one of the teachers in Salamander Primary pointed out how the learners have not necessarily internalized violence as the correct behavior. She explained how one of her learners had questioned that his mom was verbally and physically abused at home. This is an important finding as it indicates that the learner has *not* internalized the violent behavior from the home, rather he questions his home environment and uses the classroom as a safe space to engage in a dialogue about what is happening at home. This also shows how the learners are active agents and can react upon the values from home, rather than being passive

recipients of norms and values from the primary socialization (Connell, 2005; Berger & Luckmann, 1966). Furthermore, linking this to dialogue as a pedagogical tool, one can argue that this particular example of how a dialogue can transform and shape the learner's world view (Freire, 1970). If the teacher had simply conformed to a "banking education", speaking about gender-based violence as it is stated in the learning material and curriculum of Life Skills, by "filling" the learners with knowledge, this particular situation wouldn't have emerged.

Several teachers mentioned the importance of linking the classroom-discussions and practical lessons to the learners' home background, which shows how they consciously make use of the knowledge base learners have acquired regarding gender roles and norms. An example of this is one of the teachers at Mouse Primary, who had arranged a role-play activity for the girls in her class where they practiced "saying no" in uncomfortable situations. Linking the discussions to the learners' own experiences is crucial for engaging the learners in discussions to question their own situation, as hooks (1994) argues.

### ***6.2.3.2 Necessarily challenging the home backgrounds***

Several of the teachers mentioned how they found it difficult to speak about topics related to the gender-based challenges, in fear of "criticizing" what was being taught at home. Some of them specifically mentioned how the gender roles and norms they attempted to practice in school were in contrast to the home background. As Darnell & Hoem (1996) argue, there is a "risk" of resocialization or desocialization if there is conflict between the values at home and in the school. However, I will argue that resocialization and desocialization is not necessarily negative in the context of this research. In fact, it seems to be essential in order to change the learners perceptions and attitudes towards gender, which is one of the main drivers for the gender-based challenges. For instance, for learners who come from home backgrounds where their mothers are disrespected and/or physically abused, the teachers *need* to challenge this to stop the cycle of violence. In this case, one might hope that a resocialization and desocialization occur.

Several learners come from backgrounds with few positive role models in their life. Linking this to how the construction of gender identity is negotiated and influenced by the interactions

and relationships in the learners' environments, one can argue that the teachers often play a significant role as a socialization actor in the construction of the learners' gender identity (Nomlomo, 2013). Berger & Luckmann (1966) argue that an emotional attachment must be present between the child and the caretakers in order for the primary socialization to be successful. Based on the findings and the context of the research, I will argue that such emotional attachment is crucial also between the child and the teachers in order for the socialization in school to be successful.

One of the teachers described how she had dealt with discussing sensitive topics on gender. She shared with me her own background where the father of her children was not involved with them anymore due to drug abuse. This information she shared with her class as well, which she argued was because she knew that several learners were without a father figure in their lives. She argued that this was an important step for the learners to also open up about their backgrounds and they got to engage in dialogues about this. As hooks (1994) argues, the teachers who are willing to share their own experiences and vulnerability in the classroom, are the teachers who are most likely to work on transformative learning. For the teacher, participating in the interactions as equal parts of the dialogue as the learners is essential in creating engagement and critical awareness (hooks, 1994; Freire, 1966).

### ***6.2.3.3 Promoting hope or hopelessness?***

Freire (1970) and hooks (1994) argue that an essential element in education for liberation is to foster a sense of hope for change among the learners. This has been mentioned by Simmonds (2014) as one of the major shortcomings of the curriculum where the content is described as pessimistic and adverse regarding gender equality and empowerment of women. The findings revealed that several teachers address topics such as gender-based violence, discrimination, stigmatization and safety-issues for girls. These topics are important to address to raise awareness of the causes of oppression, which Freire argues (1970) is a precondition for transforming the situation. However, I will argue that the major focus on the obstacles to reach gender equality might foster a sense of hopelessness towards change among the learners.

Based on Simmonds (2014) I will argue that there is a need to shift the discourse in the curriculum to make the teachers able to foster this sense of hope while at the same time balance it with creating awareness towards the causes of gender inequality. I found inspiration in the approach by the teacher in grade 7 at Salamander Primary. Throughout the interview it became clear that she was constantly challenging the underlying gender norms in her pedagogical practice by having dialogues and practical lessons which questioned the traditional gender roles and norms, as well as gender-based violence and discrimination based on stereotypes. At the same time, she included positive elements such as “fierce females” and South African women in power, both in the literature for English class and in the arts class, in order to provide positive role models for the learners, as well as focusing on the positive change that has happened in the country. I will argue that such an approach is crucial in fostering a sense of hope for the learners, as argued by Freire (1970) hooks (1994) and Simmonds (2014).

#### ***6.2.4 Approaching masculinity – Boys left behind?***

My findings revealed that gender-based violence, bullying towards boys who did not conform to the stereotypical masculine role, and discriminating attitudes from boys towards female teachers were among the gender-based challenges teachers were facing on a daily basis. The previous sections have discussed how the teachers approach gender-based challenges by “undoing gender”, encouraging learners to participate in critical dialogues and by practical lessons. To some extent, these approaches also involved challenging the hegemonic masculinity by questioning the expectations towards the males masculine role. However, it became clear that several teachers either did not feel they had the pedagogical competence to address gender-based violence, the bullying towards learners’ who didn’t conform to the masculine role and the discriminating attitudes towards female teachers. A few teachers revealed the schools’ practice as not addressing this behavior adequately. In the following, I will discuss these issues.

As discussed previously, some of the teachers used the learners’ home background as a basis for discussing gender-based violence. I will argue that questioning gender-based violence is an important step towards contesting the hegemonic masculinity. As Magaraggia and Connell (2012) argue, the hegemonic masculinity needs to be contested by other forms of masculinity

by showing that there are other functional ways of being a man, including non-violent behavior, respect and honorability. In a society where the teachers described violent behavior and masculinity performed by boys as a strategy to protect themselves in communities where this form of masculinity is hegemonic, one might question whether a dialogue is enough to contest the hegemonic masculinity. I will argue that contesting the hegemonic masculinity must permeate the whole education system, not only in terms of what the teachers are able to address within the classrooms. The statement from one of the teachers at Mouse Primary indicated that the schools' efforts are not adequate for addressing the hegemonic masculinity (section 5.2.5). She experienced that violent behavior wasn't taken seriously, exemplified by an incident where a boy was violently kicking a girl. The boy was not suspended, which the teacher strongly disagreed on. One of the female teachers at Salamander Primary also mentioned suspension of boys who performed violent behavior. Although suspension can be viewed as a means of addressing the problem, I will argue that suspension, like other punishment, rather postpones the problem and does not serve as a functional way of addressing this violence. This teacher at Salamander Primary described how two of the boys in her class had been absent for 20 and 40 days, and that they constantly were in and out of school. I believe that their repetitive behavior also strengthens my point, that the problem is only postponed and not adequately addressed. Perhaps it would be good if the school prioritized spending resources to facilitate that both the boys and the school could address the problem in other ways than suspension. For instance focus on providing positive role-models for these boys and taking time to build trust with one assigned and dedicated teacher or other grown up in school in order to be able to follow up close. To give the boys reasons to come to school, not necessary academic ones in the beginning, and applauding any small positive change, might be something to try instead of continuing doing what's been demonstrated not to work.

Addressing boys' violent behavior was found to be one of the gender-based challenges which the teachers did not have an answer to how to deal with. Additionally, the social structures of the school do not seem to break the cycle of reproducing harmful masculine behavior. As Morell (1998) stated, masculine identities are also socially constructed within social structures which are described as "*recurring patterns of social phenomena (practices and discourses) that tend to transcend time and space and thus constrain and enable behavior in specific ways*" (In Messerschmidt, 2016, p. 47). Gender-based violence, bullying towards boys who did not conform to the stereotypical masculine role, and discriminating attitudes from boys

towards female teachers can be viewed as these recurring patterns in the social structures. If the schools do not adequately try to reconstruct these patterns by addressing these masculine behaviors, it is reason to believe that the patterns will be reproduced.

For teachers to be able to address these challenges, they need to the pedagogical competence *and* a school system which supports their efforts to address these challenges. Given that females in this society encounter severe challenges connected to gender inequality, the need for promoting empowerment of females in classroom dialogues is obvious. Alongside must masculine behavior be adequately addressed and the hegemonic masculinity challenges. This is an important issue, which should be given more attention in the classroom.

Several of the teachers mentioned how the workshops initiated by the Department of Education focused on fostering values of respect and caring for each other. Particularly one of the teachers at Lion Primary told me how one of the workshops she attended had been rather helpful for her in order to address the boys with these attitudes and behavior in class. She said that she came back to her class looking at the boys in a different way, as previously she had viewed them as “the problem child”. I believe that changing the teachers’ attitudes towards these boys is crucial as a starting point, especially when considering statements where boys are excused for more than the girls by the saying “boys will be boys” as expressed by the male teacher at Eland Primary.

One of the main challenges of addressing these gender-based challenges as stated by the teachers, was seen through the conflicting attitudes and practice of gender norms between the home and the schools. To restate my previous argument, I will argue that addressing these challenges *requires* a re- and desocialization in order for the learners’ to change violent behavior. However, by not adequately addressing these boys’ attitudes and behavior, one might question whether the teachers and schools are in fact building upon the primary socialization, rather than challenging it. To substantiate my point; several teachers described home environments where there are lower expectations and restrictions for boys, while girls are protected more, and had more restrictions regarding what they were allowed to do. According to the male teacher at Eland Primary, these patterns of expectations were also visible in the schools where boys are excused for more than the girls by the saying “boys will be boys”. This is an example of how socialization actors in the school show similar patterns of expectations towards girls and boys as the socialization actors in the homes, which might

also be a partial explanation for girls who perform better academically. To tailor this example to gender-based violence, if the schools are not addressing this adequately, they might be showing similar attitudes of acceptance towards violence as the primary socialization in home.

Although my findings show that a few of the teachers were trying to foster critical thinking towards harmful masculine behavior by undoing gender and challenging the hegemonic masculinity, I will argue that these issues need to be addressed throughout the system. If only a few teachers actually address this in class, then one might be curious whether the school adequately serves a socialization arena in which traditional and patriarchal patterns of masculinity can be challenged.

## 7. Conclusion

The classroom, with all its limitations, remains a location of possibility. In that field of possibility we have the opportunity to labor for freedom, to demand of ourselves and our comrades, an openness of mind and heart that allows us to face reality even as we collectively imagine ways to move beyond boundaries, to transgress. (hooks, 1994, p. 207)

In the introduction I posed a question as to whether this quote with its claim on “the classroom as a location of possibility” is the reality for teachers in this research. In concluding this thesis, I believe this quote reflects a crucial argument that classrooms *can be* a location of possibility to challenge and transform the attitudes, perceptions and practice of gender roles that often lead to gender-based challenges.

As my thesis shows, the findings to the first research question: “What are the current gender-based challenges in the case schools?” show that these challenges are closely linked to the patterns of different social expectations towards girls and boys in society. Particularly, the expectations towards boys as fulfilling the “masculine” role has been viewed as an obstacle related to gender-based violence, bullying towards boy learners who do not conform to the stereotypical masculine role, and disrespectful attitudes towards girls and female teachers. Therefore it is crucial for teachers to address the stereotypical expectations by challenging the societal patterns of gender roles and norms in the classrooms.

The findings and discussion to the second research question: “*To what extent and in what ways are teachers addressing gender-based challenges in the classrooms?*” show that some teachers are dedicated to engaging learners in critical discussions, by questioning the stereotypes and expectations towards gender roles and gender norms through dialogue and practical lessons. Although this might cause a re- and desocialization of the values related to gender roles in the learners’ home background, I have argued that this is crucial in order to change and transform the social structure of continuous patterns reinforcing the unequal gender roles. The discussion of topics related to gender equality seem to be imbalanced, where the focus on oppression as such outplays the focus on hope and ability to change the situation of oppression. The lack of focus on positive role models and the ability to achieve gender equality might cause a sense of apathy, rather than hope and engagement for change towards a gender equal society. There is also an indication that female teachers are more



engaged and dedicated in addressing the gender-based challenges, regardless of whether the topics in the curriculum addresses this. Hence, the extent to which teachers address gender-based challenges and engage in a co-operative learning space, seems depend on the teachers background and their personal experiences of gender inequality.

The findings and discussion to the final research question “*To what extent does addressing gender-based challenges cause pedagogical and practical challenges in teaching and learning?*» revealed that teachers have a hectic schedule which might affect the time they spend on addressing topics on gender equality. Several teachers stated that they were not equipped with the pedagogical competence to deal with these challenges, as well as a lack of focus on addressing these challenges throughout the school system. This was particularly seen in the challenge of addressing boys’ violent behavior, attitudes and bullying towards other learners. Several teachers pointed to the lack of support from these boys’ home environment as well as the challenge of cooperating with their caretakers. The combination of these challenges may indicate that these boys are left behind when addressing gender-based challenges. I believe this is a crucial point to consider in the work towards gender equality, as these boys behavior in schools indicate a strong reinforcement of the masculine pattern, which perpetuates the cycle of violence and downplaying non-hegemonic masculinities in the society.

The findings revealed only small deviations between the case schools, and hence I will argue that although this cannot by any means be generalized quantitatively, there might be a reflection of similar patterns in schools situated in similar socioeconomic contexts in the Western Cape.

As a final note, examining the pedagogical approaches applied by some of the teachers, this study argues that classrooms *can be* a location of possibility to challenge and transform the attitudes, perceptions and practice of gender roles which often lead to gender-based challenges. The findings indicate that Cape Town teachers *can be* drivers for change towards gender equality, if they are equipped with the pedagogical competence and enough time to do so. Hence, there should be an increased focus on this in the Teacher Education Institutions, as well as the workshops provided by the Department of Education.

## 7.1 Suggestions for further Research

Based on the knowledge I was able to attain from this research, I will suggest that further research should focus on a comprehensive exploration of the boys who are “left behind”. How can education institutions and teachers properly include interventions which includes these boys and tackles their violent behavior and discriminating attitudes towards females, and males who do not conform to the so-called hegemonic masculinity?

The teacher at Lion Primary who had attended the workshops initiated by the Department of Education focusing on fostering values of respect and caring for each other, inspired me to reflect upon what further research could be done. What would happen if the majority of teachers changed their attitude from viewing a troubled boy as ‘the problem child’ to ‘an interesting child’? Thus, thinking that the unacceptable actions is not a characteristic of who the child is, rather a result of factors the child doesn’t have dominion over, such as lack of good role-models and home background. Further research can benefit by existing literature on the field of hegemonic masculinity, by including these perspectives in an action-based research in schools.

A very brief sketch of an interesting research project could be to interview teachers about challenges concerning violent and disrespectful boys, interviewing the ‘troublemakers’ and some of their peers and observe the same teachers in the classroom. This to investigate if there is any commonalities in what is considered the major challenges and how the teachers interact with these boys. Then address these findings and together with the teachers compile a ‘tool box’ with suggestions on how to interact with ‘the interesting child’ to build trust, a healthy self-esteem and work towards change of behavior. This could be done in some kind of workshops, in line with the ones initiated by the Department of Education. Then the teachers could work on implementing this in their classrooms, followed by observations and interviews with the same teachers and learners to investigate if any changes have occurred.

I would love to go back to Cape Town to do this research project and maybe contribute a little bit more to change, also for ‘the interesting children’, towards “We are meant to help and care for each other”, as one 6<sup>th</sup> graders mindmap at Lion Primary school stated.

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# **Appendix**

APPENDIX A. INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR TEACHERS

APPENDIX B. INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR ORGANIZATIONS

APPENDIX C. OBSERVATION FORM

APPENDIX D. CONSENT FORM

APPENDIX E. WCED RESEARCH APPROVAL

APPENDIX F. MINDMAPS GR. 6

## Appendix A: Interview guide for teachers

### Semi-structured Interview-guide

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#### *Promoting gender equality in classrooms*

##### **Respondent group: Teachers, Cape Town**

- Informed Consent, Introduction to the research, confidentiality, recording, etc. (See NSD-outline, Norwegian Centre for Research Data)
- Letter from Oslo Metropolitan University – confirmation of the study from the institution
- The ability/right to withdraw at any time from the interview

##### **Focus areas**

- *How the concept of gender equality is understood*
  - *The teachers role in relation to gender inequality/roles/norms in classrooms*
  - *How the curriculum & practice relates to the students' background and the challenges in the community*
- 

##### **Part 1. Basic information**

- (Gender)
- How many years of teaching? Previously worked at other schools?
- Education background? Professional development?
- Which subjects and grades do you teach?
- Can you describe the characteristics of the area this school is situated in? (challenges – gender equality in the community)
- Are you also from this area?
- Can you tell me about the ethnic & cultural background of your students?

##### **Part 2. Gender equality**

- 1) From your experience, what is the status of gender equality in South Africa?
- 2) What do you believe is the reason for the status of gender equality?
- 3) How would you define gender equality?
- 4) What are the main difference between the roles of women and men, girls and boys in SA?
- 5) How would you describe the situation of gender equality in this school? (*I.e. relationships between boys and girls, gender norms/roles, violence, discrimination*)
- 6) Are there any academic differences between boys and girls in this school? (*i.e. attendance-levels, retention-levels, participation in class, academic achievements*)

- 7) Which initiatives do you know about, regarding the promotion of gender equality in schools in South Africa? (i.e. workshops, teachers code of conduct, subject of 'Life Skills/Orientation')
- 8) The UNs Sustainable Development Goal number 5 is about achieving Gender Equality and Empower all women and girls, is this something you discuss in class? (*Goal 5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls. ... Providing women and girls with equal access to education, health care, decent work, and representation in political and economic decision-making processes will fuel sustainable economies and benefit societies and humanity at large.*)

### **Part 3. Curriculum & Practice**

*RQ 2: In what ways do the teachers promote gender equality in classrooms?*

*RQ 3: What are the challenges of promoting gender equality in classrooms?*

- 1) Life Skills/Life Orientation: Does it reflect the everyday life of the learners' at this school? (*Gangsterism, violence, crime, gender based violence, discrimination*)
- 2) What are your thoughts on which role you as a teacher have in forming positive values for the children regarding gender equality? Are these values contradicting/same as the home values?
- 3) Are there clear guidelines for teachers' of how to discuss topics related to gender equality in class?
- 4) Do you see any differences in how the children act towards each other based on their home background? (*Relate back to question of cultural/ethnic background of the children*)
- 5) Do you as a teacher discuss gender norms/roles in class? How? (*Masculinity, Equal responsibilities, gender roles and expectations*)
- 6) Do you discuss traditional gender roles/gender roles in religion? (*learners' knowledge background*)
- 7) How do you perceive boys' and girls' engagement in class? How do you respond to input from boys' and girls'? Differently?
- 8) Do you have the same or different expectations towards girls and boys in the classroom? (*concentration, task-fulfilment, participation*)
- 9) When teaching about different topics in class: Do you provide examples from both boys' and girls' everyday experiences? Is this something you reflect around?
- 10) Beyond the curriculum, are there particular situations in the classrooms where you believe it is important to address issues related to gender equality for the students?
- 11) Are there any particular challenges of promoting gender equal classrooms? If so, what are the solutions to this? (*I.e. curriculum, preparation of teachers, practice*)
- 12) What is the most important contribution this school/your position as a teacher make in this community?

### **Part 3. Concluding interview**

- Is there anything else you want to mention, either as part of this interview or without the recorder?
- Thank them for their time and their valuable contribution to the research. Get back to the introducing information and ask participant how I can contact them to send over the transcribed interview (if they wish) and the thesis later on.
- Give them my contact-details so they can easily get in contact if they have any questions or wish to withdraw the information.

## Appendix B: Interview guide for organizations

### Semi-structured Interview-guide

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*Promoting gender equality in classrooms.*

#### **Respondent group: Organisations, Gender Equality, Cape Town**

- Informed Consent, Introduction to the research, confidentiality, recording, etc. (See NSD-outline, Norwegian Centre for Research Data)
- Letter from Oslo Metropolitan University – confirmation of the study from the institution
- The ability/right to withdraw at any time from the interview

#### **Focus areas**

- *Main gender debates in society – the organizations part in addressing this*
  - *Perceptions of how gender equality should be dealt with at schools –*
  - *How can the schools address the issues of the main debates?*
  - *Accomplishments/challenges of the organization in general/related to gender equality/perceptions/roles in the community*
- 

#### **Basic information about the informant**

- How many years in the organization? Other organizations previously?
- Main reason for joining?

#### **Basic information about the organization**

- Can you tell me about the history of this organization? How did it start?
- Facts about the organization: How many workers, scale of outreach, which programs, expanding?
- Main goals/areas of work?
- Scale of outreach? Regionally, Nationally, Locally?

#### **Gender & Society**

- From your experience, what is the status of gender equality in South Africa?
- What do you believe is the reason for the status of gender equality?

- How would you define gender equality?
- What are the main gender debates in society? How do you work relating to these debates?  
(Contributions/Monitoring)
- Are there large differences between gender equality/inequality of different areas?
- Does the organization work towards addressing these challenges? If so, how?
- How does the environments in the communities affect children and youth? Gender norms, roles, traditions?
- What role does the educational institutions have in dealing with gender inequality?
- How can schools address the issues of the main gender inequality debates?
- What do you think are the main challenges of these institutions?
- What would you like to see change in the educational institutions as a key towards working more effectively towards gender equality/healthy perceptions of gender roles/norms?
- Which arenas other than the schools are important for challenging gender inequality?
- What are the achievements towards reaching gender equality in SA the past years? The most important contribution of this organization?

### **Part 3. Concluding interview**

- Is there anything else you want to mention, either as part of this interview or without the recorder?
- Thank the participant for their time and their valuable contribution to the research. Get back to the introducing information and ask participant how I can contact them to send over the transcribed interview (if they wish) and the thesis later on.
- Give them my contact-details so they can easily get in contact if they have any questions or wish to withdraw the information.



## Appendix C: Observation Form

### Observation Form

*Promoting gender equality in classrooms.*

**Focus areas:**

- How is the content of the curricula presented? Pedagogical methods, interactions, gender awareness, gender sensitivity
- RQ2: In what ways do the teachers promote gender equality in classrooms?
- RQ3: What are the challenges of promoting gender equality in classrooms
- (If teacher has been interviewed, note observation-points from interview)

Date and Time:

Class/Subject:

Teacher:

Key Aspects	Observations	Comments
<p><i>Physical Environment</i></p> <p>Classroom structure, equipment, furniture, books, blackboard, pedagogical illustrations and text on the walls</p>		
<p><i>Social Environment</i></p> <p>Organization of seating in classroom, characteristics of learners, teacher and the social roles in the classrooms</p>		
<p><i>Interactions</i></p> <p>Formal, informal, planned, unplanned, verbal, non-verbal: teacher-students, students-teacher, students-students, with a gender-sensitive approach</p>		
<p><i>Activities</i></p> <p>Learning activities, teaching methods, pedagogic style, Curricula, Group work/Individually, academic participation among girls &amp; boys</p>		

## Appendix D: Consent Form

### **Are you interested in taking part in the research project ”Gender equality in education. A study of the teachers’ role in promoting gender equality in classrooms”?**

This is an inquiry about participation in a research project where the main purpose is to investigate how teachers promote aspects of gender equality in classrooms in Cape Town. In this letter I will give you information about the purpose of the project and what your participation will involve.

#### **Purpose of the project**

This research project is part of fulfilling the master degree “International Education & Development” at Oslo Metropolitan University. The purpose of the project is to explore what role educational institutions play in addressing issues and challenges related to gender inequality in South Africa by promoting gender equality in classrooms.

The objective of the research is stated through the following research questions

- To what extent is gender equality promoted in the curriculum and in the learning area of ‘Life Skills’/‘Life Orientation’?
- In what ways do the teachers promote gender equality in classrooms?
- What are the challenges of promoting gender equality in classrooms?

#### **Who is responsible for the research project?**

Oslo Metropolitan University is the institution responsible for the project.

#### **Why are you being asked to participate?**

In order to collect relevant data for this research project, a strategic selection of key contributors are asked to participate due to their relevant background for the aim of this research.

#### **What does participation involve for you?**

If you choose to take part in this project, this will include your contribution through an individual semi-structured interview and/or an observation in the classroom. The interview-guide will suggest relevant themes for the conversation. However, it is important for this research that the participant’s can speak freely and contribute with own thoughts and perspectives. The interview will take approximately 45 minutes. In order to ensure that the participant’s feel correctly represented, the information will be recorded through a sound recorder and transcribed after the interview. The participant will also get access to the transcribed interview and be able to comment if they do not feel correctly represented.

As the themes of the interview evolves around aspects and thoughts regarding gender equality in South Africa, it is possible that the informant’s political opinion might be identified. However, the participant can freely choose whether to respond to these particular questions. The participant’s identity will be kept anonymous throughout the research project and all personal data, including the recorded and transcribed interviews will be deleted once the project is finished.

The observation will take place in the classroom during class, where some key aspects will be observed. Although the starting point is that of the researcher taking a ‘passive role’ with no disturbances, it is important that the teacher freely decides what is favorable and feasible. Therefore

the observation might also be conducted as participatory, where the researcher can assist the teacher in chosen tasks and activities.

**Participation is voluntary**

Participation in the project is voluntary. If you chose to participate, you can withdraw your consent at any time without giving a reason. There will be no negative consequences for you if you chose not to participate or later decide to withdraw.

**Your personal privacy – how we will store and use your personal data**

We will only use your personal data for the purpose(s) specified in this information letter. We will process your personal data confidentially and in accordance with data protection legislation (the General Data Protection Regulation and Personal Data Act).

Your personal data will only be used as stated for the purpose of this research. Your identity will be protected and kept anonymous throughout the research. In order to fulfil this, your personal data will be replaced by fictive names and places in the thesis. It is solely my supervisor and I who will have access to your personal data. The data will be kept in a secure space throughout the research project and deleted when the project is finished.

**What will happen to your personal data at the end of the research project?**

The project is scheduled to end May 2020. All personal data, including transcribed interviews will be deleted at the end of the research project.

**Your rights**

So long as you can be identified in the collected data, you have the right to:

- access the personal data that is being processed about you
- request that your personal data is deleted
- request that incorrect personal data about you is corrected/rectified
- receive a copy of your personal data (data portability), and
- send a complaint to the Data Protection Officer or The Norwegian Data Protection Authority regarding the processing of your personal data

**What gives us the right to process your personal data?**

We will process your personal data based on your consent. Based on an agreement with Oslo Metropolitan University, NSD – The Norwegian Centre for Research Data AS has assessed that the processing of personal data in this project is in accordance with data protection legislation.

**Where can I find out more?**

If you have questions about the project, or want to exercise your rights, contact:

- *Researcher Hilde Storhoug via [hildestorhoug@gmail.com](mailto:hildestorhoug@gmail.com)*
- *Oslo Metropolitan University via Halldis Breidlid [halldis@oslomet.no](mailto:halldis@oslomet.no)*
- Our Data Protection Officer: Ingrid S. Jacobsen, [personvernombud@oslomet.no](mailto:personvernombud@oslomet.no)
- NSD – The Norwegian Centre for Research Data AS, by email: ([personvertjenester@nsd.no](mailto:personvertjenester@nsd.no)) or by telephone: +47 55 58 21 17.

Yours sincerely,

Project Leader  
Halldis Breidlid

Student  
Hilde Storhoug

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## Consent form

I have received and understood information about the project “*Gender equality in education. A study of the teachers’ role in promoting gender equality in classrooms*” and have been given the opportunity to ask questions. I give consent:

- to participate in *an interview*
- for the interview being recorded and transcribed
- for researcher *Hilde Storhoug* and supervisor *Halldis Breidlid* to access the transcribed interview throughout the research project
- to anonymized citations from the interview being stated in the project thesis
  
- to participate in *an observation*
- for notes to be taken during observation
- for researcher *Hilde Storhoug* and supervisor *Halldis Breidlid* to access notes from the observation throughout the research project
- to use the collected data (anonymized) from the observations in the project thesis

The interviews and observations will be conducted by *Hilde Storhoug*.

I give consent for my personal data to be processed until the end date of the project, approx. *May 2020*.

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(Signed by participant, date)

## Appendix E: WCED Research Approval



Western Cape  
Government  
Education

Directorate: Research

[Audrey.wyngaard@westerncape.gov.za](mailto:Audrey.wyngaard@westerncape.gov.za)  
tel: +27 021 467 9272  
Fax: 0865902282  
Private Bag x9114, Cape Town, 8000  
wced.wcape.gov.za

**REFERENCE:** 20190709-6546  
**ENQUIRIES:** Dr A.T Wyngaard

Mrs Hilde Storhoug  
Grønlandsleiret 23, 0190  
Oslo  
Norway

Dear Mrs Hilde Storhoug

**RESEARCH PROPOSAL: GENDER EQUALITY IN EDUCATION. A STUDY OF THE TEACHERS' ROLE IN PROMOTING GENDER EQUALITY IN CLASSROOMS, CAPE TOWN, SOUTH AFRICA**

Your application to conduct the above-mentioned research in schools in the Western Cape has been approved subject to the following conditions:

1. Principals, educators and learners are under no obligation to assist you in your investigation.
2. Principals, educators, learners and schools should not be identifiable in any way from the results of the investigation.
3. You make all the arrangements concerning your investigation.
4. Educators' programmes are not to be interrupted.
5. The Study is to be conducted from **22 July 2019 till 20 September 2019**
6. No research can be conducted during the fourth term as schools are preparing and finalizing syllabi for examinations (October to December).
7. Should you wish to extend the period of your survey, please contact Dr A.T Wyngaard at the contact numbers above quoting the reference number?
8. A photocopy of this letter is submitted to the principal where the intended research is to be conducted.
9. Your research will be limited to the list of schools as forwarded to the Western Cape Education Department.
10. A brief summary of the content, findings and recommendations is provided to the Director: Research Services.
11. The Department receives a copy of the completed report/dissertation/thesis addressed to:

**The Director: Research Services  
Western Cape Education Department  
Private Bag X9114  
CAPE TOWN  
8000**

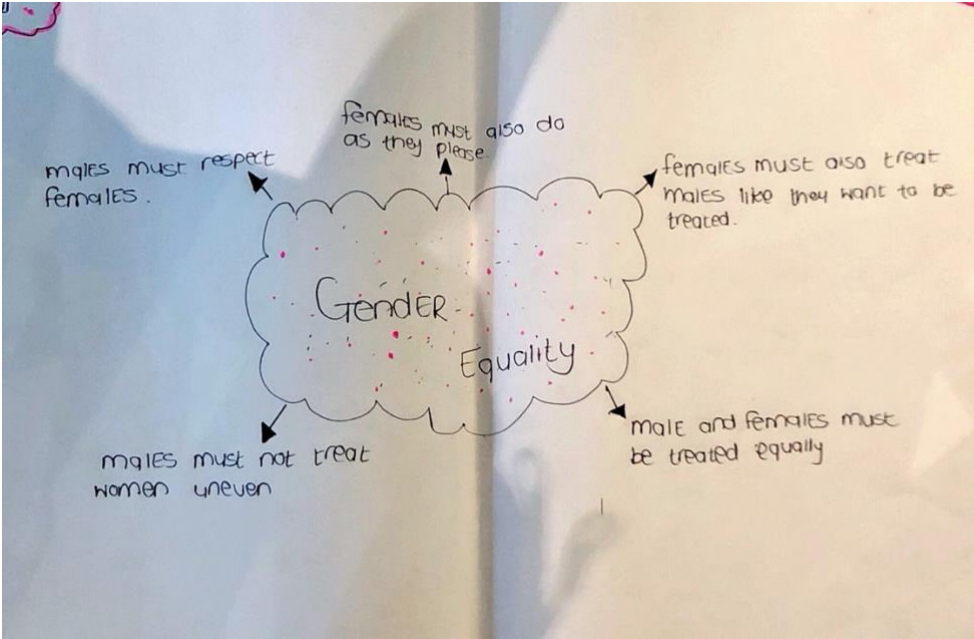
We wish you success in your research.

Kind regards.  
Signed: Dr Audrey T Wyngaard  
Directorate: Research  
DATE: 11 July 2019

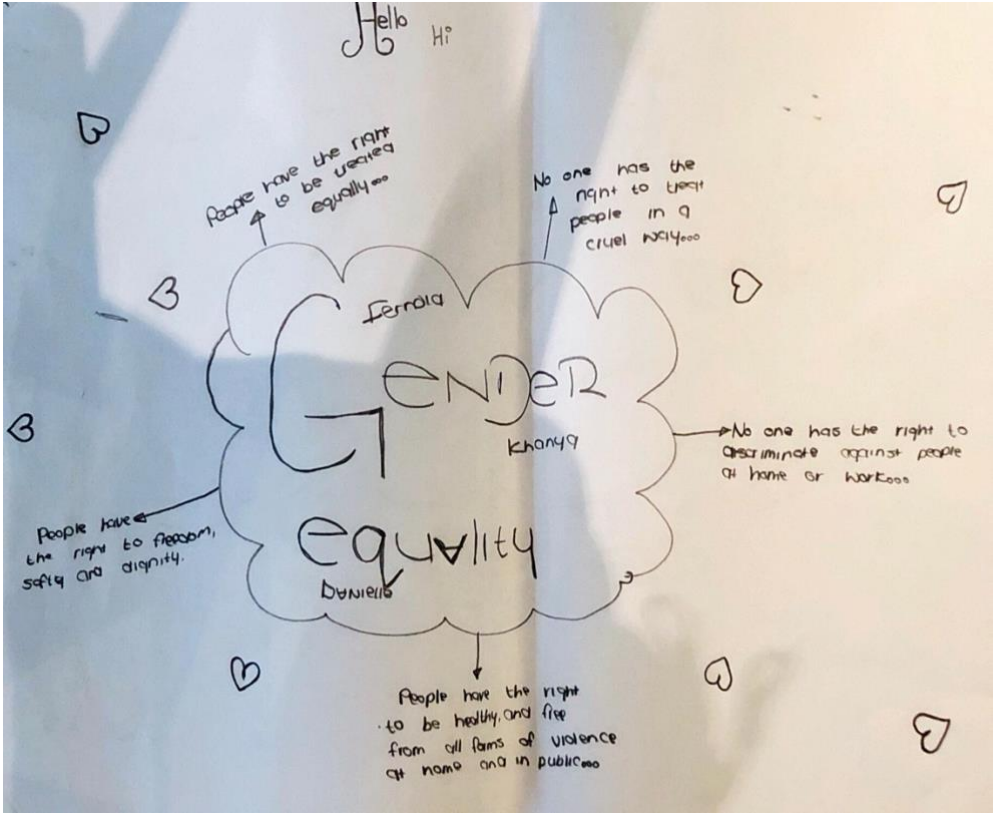
Lower Parliament Street, Cape Town, 8001  
tel: +27 21 467 9272 fax: 0865902282  
Safe Schools: 0800 45 46 47

Private Bag X9114, Cape Town, 8000  
Employment and salary enquiries: 0861 92 33 22  
[www.westerncape.gov.za](http://www.westerncape.gov.za)

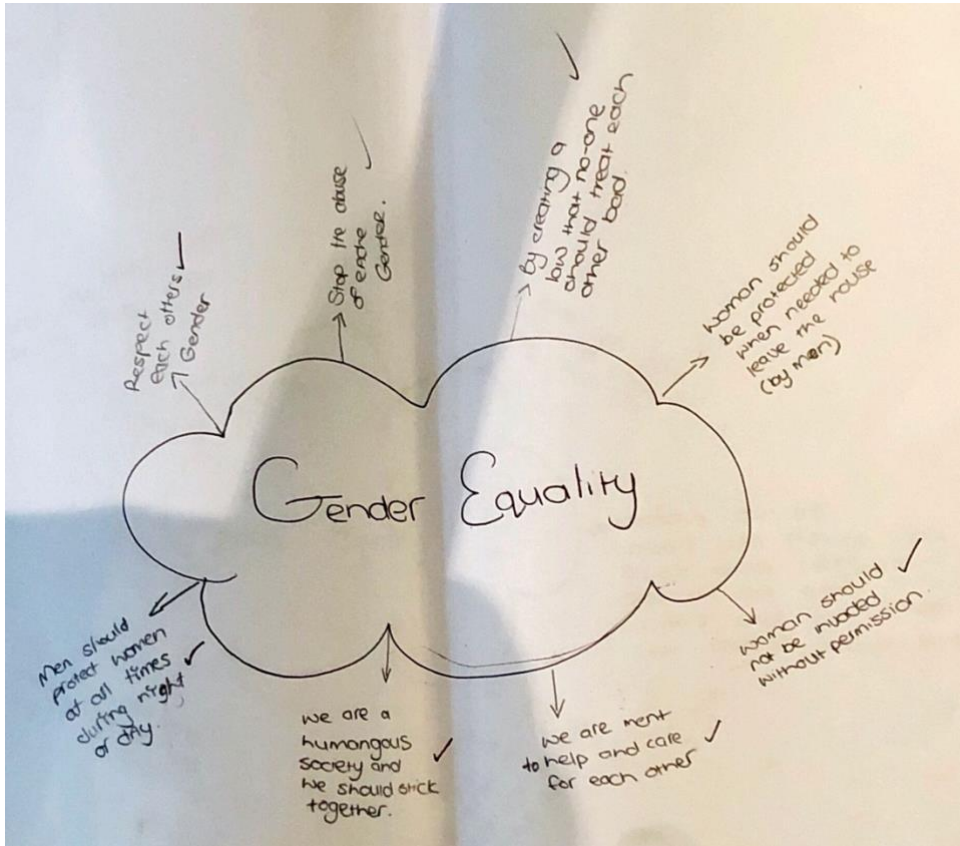
**Appendix F: Mind-maps gr. 6 (Classroom activity)**



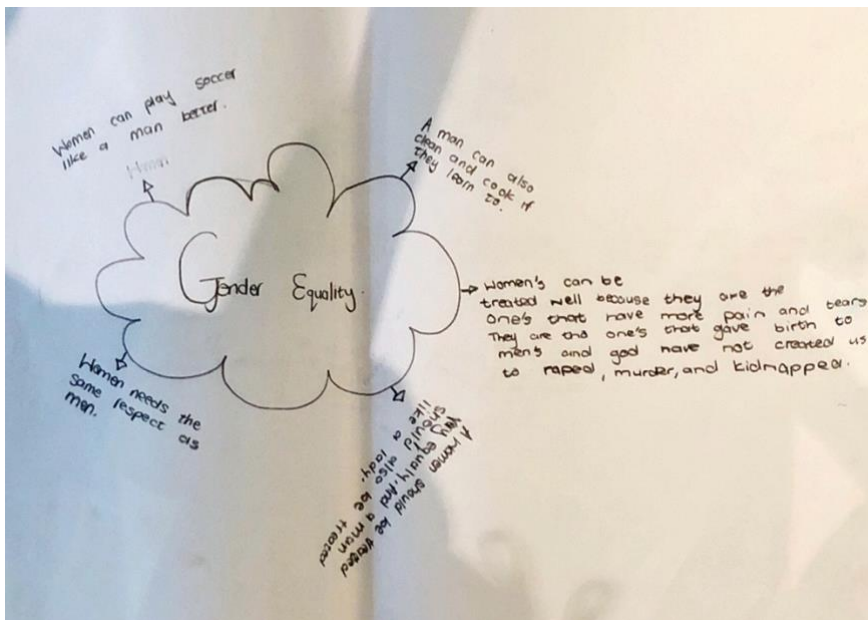
Mind-map A.



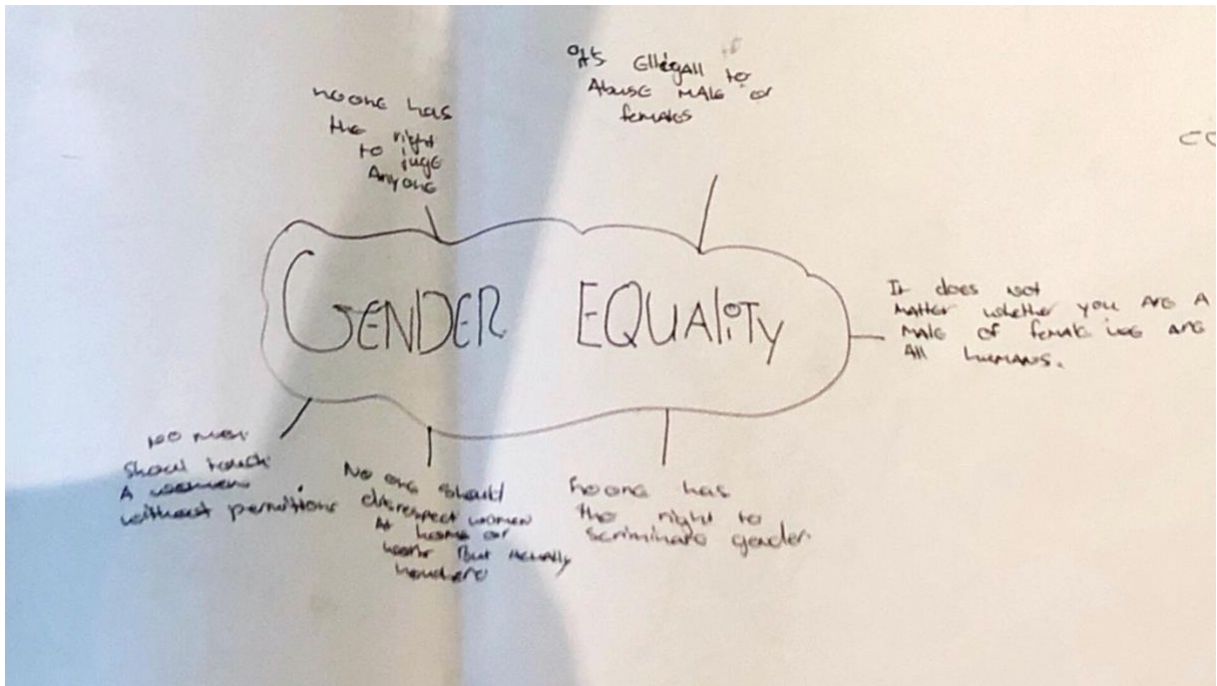
Mind-map B.



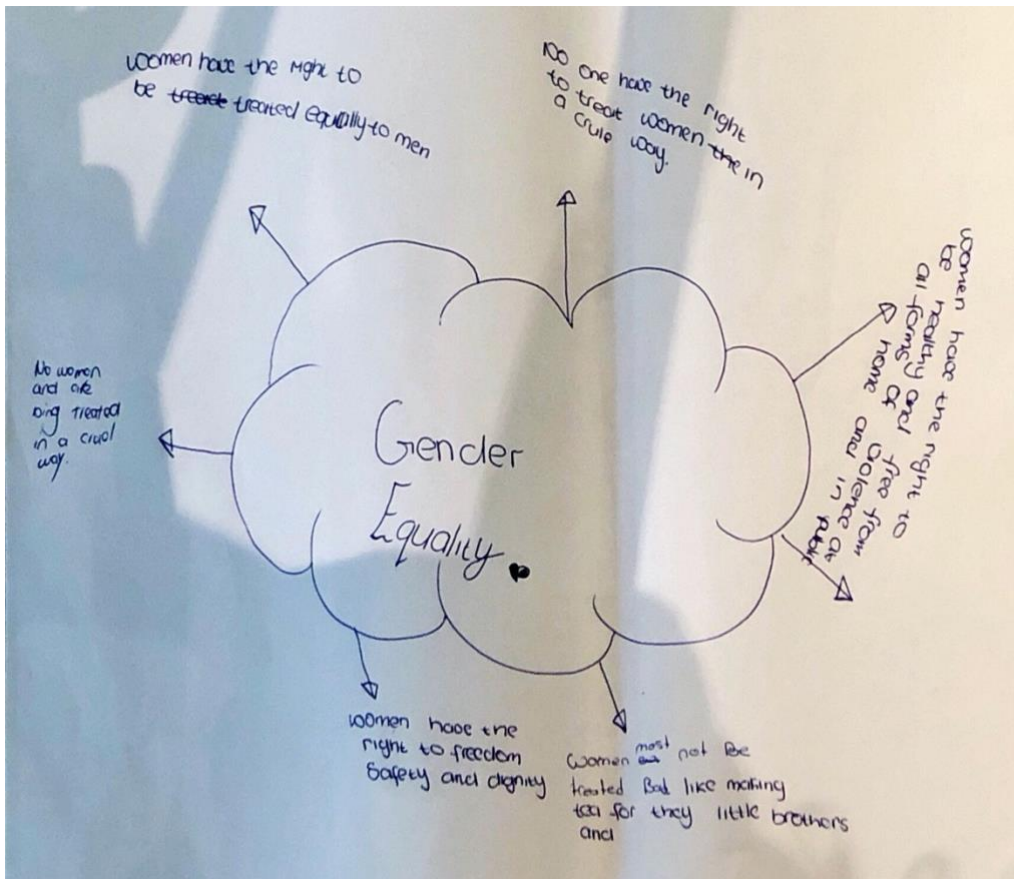
Mind-map C.



Mind-map D.

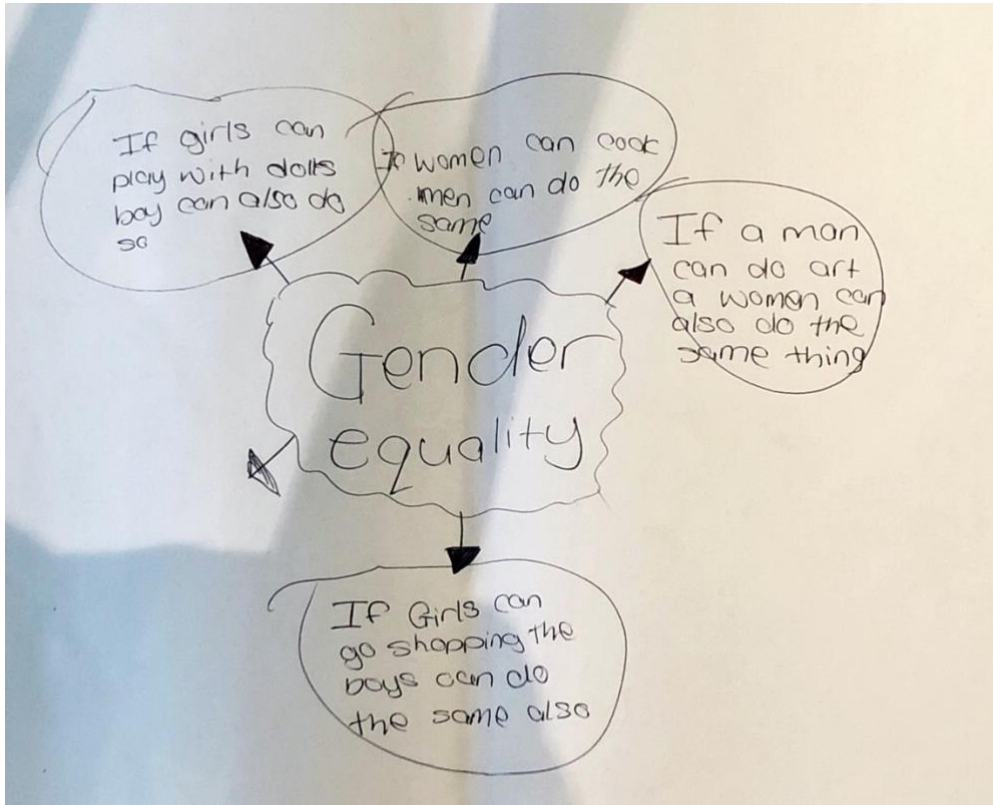


Mind-map E.

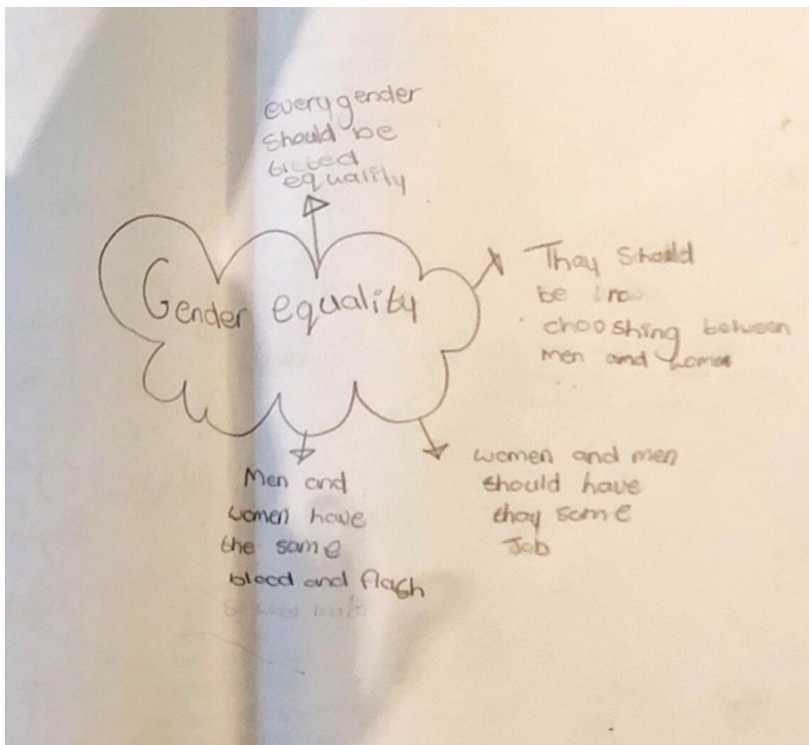


Mind-map F.





Mind-map G.



Mind-map H.