

# Gender Mainstreaming in Teacher Education

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## **Abstract**

Gender mainstreaming is an equity demand that can best be implemented by professors in teacher education programs using right course material and pedagogical methods that integrate gender issues. The present paper explores whether the gender approach has been integrated in teacher education programs at 11 universities in Lebanon. Vision, mission, program learning outcomes of the teacher education programs in the various participating universities were collected upon request to check whether they are effective tools in guiding goals, plans and activities as they relate to gender. The following course syllabi were also collected from the participating universities: a) One course in educational psychology b) one course in subject matter; c) one course in educational assessment; d) one course in generic instructional methods; e) one subject-specific methods course; f) one specific methods course in early childhood; and g) one practicum course. It is clear, from the minimal available data, that none of the teacher education programs at the different universities integrates gender into its policy, mission, curriculum, or resources. The paper suggests a set of recommendations that can be implemented to mainstream gender in teacher education programs.

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## **I. Introduction**

Education is generally recognized as playing a key role in the development of all aspects of life. Education augments the potential of women for contributing to the social, economic, and political aspects of development. Education, in its scope and processes, also contributes to change that can restore the imbalance between men and women. Education is always considered a main concern and one of the most rewarding areas for investment of resources. An extensive body of literature in education shows that gender inequality and inequity are prevalent in the domain of education and permeate such aspects as curriculum, enrollment, classroom dynamics, materials used, teacher training and achievement. Education perpetuates gender inequalities and inequities at different levels in different countries at different times. Gender mainstreaming is an equity demand that can best be implemented by professors in teacher education programs using right course material and pedagogical methods that integrate gender issues. However, according to Pearson et al. (1993) there are no cases in which gender permeated teacher education programs. In light of what has been mentioned, the present paper explores whether the gender approach has been integrated in teacher education programs at different universities in Lebanon.

### **1. Gender studies in teacher education programs**

Gender in teacher education remains an under researched area despite the loads of gender studies research. Pearson et, al. (1993) confirm that while gender studies is of major concern in universities in Canada, they have not had the anticipated influence on courses and programs in faculties of education. Gender mainstreaming is extensively found in the humanities and the liberal arts; however, there are no cases in which gender mainstreaming has permeated education departments, especially pre-service professional teacher education. The justification for gender mainstreaming in the humanities is different from that in teacher education. In the latter, much of the concern is with how knowledge is applied in professional contexts. Hence, mainstreamed gender studies play a major role in the professional work of teachers.

Although a host of universities in the United States has been involved in the “integration movement,” namely, engaging in academic activities, such as conferences, seminars and faculty development projects, to devise strategies that would facilitate gender mainstreaming (Pearson et al., 1993), findings of the study conducted by Mader and King (1995) at 30 teacher preparation institutions in Michigan, show that gender-related instruction is lacking in teacher education programs. Despite the fact that faculty members and student-teachers in the teacher education programs advocated instruction on gender issues, they were not aware of how it might relate to the courses they teach. Unlike earlier research, Mader and King also found that lack of instruction on gender issues is unrelated to factors such as age and sex of faculty, stated program policy or program accreditation, but to making a decision to integrate gender studies findings in teacher education programs.

Along the same lines, Weist (2007) argues, in a study designed to investigate the impact of a new “Gender Issues in Education” graduate course conducted at a Western University during the fall of 2004 and 2006, that although gender affects an individual’s educational experiences and world views, gender issues in teacher education seem to have faded in favor of other educational issues. Teacher education that is one of the most fertile lands to examine key issues that affect learners do not give gender much attention. For example, gender issues are barely noticed in teacher education textbooks or they treat topics in a stereotypical and inaccurate way (Zittleman & Sadker, 2002). As Sanders (2002) puts it, “ Multicultural education has become a thriving component of teacher education nationwide. Gender equity, however, is in the earliest stages of consideration” (p.242).

Gender issues in education keep manifesting themselves in different sub-domains within the field. Women face different problems in academe (Kurtz-Costes, Helmke, & ULKU-Steiner, 2006), men experience several challenges as elementary teachers (Cushman, 2005; Weist, Olive & Obenchain, 2003) , and student-teachers show more concern regarding gender issues which inform their professional choices rather than those set by policy-makers (Skelton 2007). Poole and Isaacs (1993) note that

much of the extensive body of literature on gender and education since the 1970's has focused on government policies and education of girls in elementary and secondary education while little emphasis has been given to higher education. Poole and Isaacs question the role of higher education institutions in reproducing stereotypical and patriarchal relationships between males and females. The problem becomes worse in the case of teacher education institutions.

## **2. Gender mainstreaming is a major equity demand**

Gender, a social construct, is so integrated in our daily life that whatever is gendered seems natural. Eckert and McConnell (2003) note that gender is deeply embedded in our institutions, our actions, our beliefs, and our desires that it appears to us to be completely natural. Gender role socialization starts at home and continues at school as children progress from one level to the other. These children construct their gender identities through interacting with other children, adults, and other factors that contribute to the gender socialization process. Leo-Rhynie et, al. (1999) argue that schools do not pass on "common cultural heritage" but rather transmit a select part of that heritage that is biased towards the social groups that made the selection. Such selection reflects the latter's forms of thought while it excludes those of the disadvantaged group. Leo-Rhynie et, al. add that schools are gendered societies that reflect the gendered relations and gender stereotypes prevalent in the social world. Students are socialized to behave according to gender stereotypes. What male and female students learn at school prepares them to enter the labor market with different skills and interests that lead to differential treatment by employers (Kane, 1996). Leo-Rhynie et. al. (1999) argue that "there are persistent sex differences in educational processes within the schools, based on cultural beliefs about sex differences between women and men in both character and ability. Females and males are subjected to differential socialization in mixed classrooms and are rewarded for different things. Females tend to learn 'femininity' instead of 'masculinity', i.e., they learn to be docile and subservient instead of independent and thoughtful." (p. 19)

Mader and King (1995) claim that feminists and equity scholars have called for the integration of gender issues in teacher education programs.

Consequently, recommendations for teacher education curricula have included the study of "equity legislation, women in education, sex differences, female developmental psychology, gender bias in texts, equitable teaching skills, linguistic bias, and classroom interaction bias" (p. 3). Mader and King add that feminists and equity scholars have focused on two central points of difference in gender studies in teacher education, namely, equity approaches and transformative approaches. The former emphasize equal treatment of males and females in classrooms and curricula, equal educational outcomes for both and female access to traditionally male-restricted domains while the latter highlight the revaluing of traditionally female qualities as well as a departure from male-devised norms and cultivate in all students the best skills and aspects of each gender.

However, Bailey and Campbell (1993) have dispelled the belief that gender awareness and feminist research benefits only women and girls. Instead, research of this kind that deals with issues of diversity/gender has shown to benefit both sexes since the primary goal of the research is to draw attention to individual differences and to level the playing field. However, Weaver-Hightower (2003) notes that "until recently, most policy, practice, and research on gender and education focused on girls and girls' issues. This is as it should be, for in every society women as a group relative to men are disadvantaged socially, culturally, politically, and economically. All of these realms, of course, are integral to the study of schooling" (p. 471).

Pearson et al. (1993) describe mainstreaming as a long trip from male-defined to gender-balanced education. It revisits the perennial question of what types of knowledge are of most worth and challenge what is considered natural. Females are constantly being assessed in relation to the male-defined norm which is taken for granted and naturalized. So they pinpoint what is essential and why, what can and cannot be done and how to assess opportunities and make them handy to both males and females. Pearson et al. confirm that it cannot be denied that gender mainstreaming is a major equity demand that can best be implemented by professors in teacher education programs using the right course material and pedagogical methods that integrate gender issues.

### **3. Gap between reform recommendation and actual instruction**

Examining teacher education curricula, in a study that focused on professional courses within pre-service programs in the UK, Mader and King (1995) reported a gap between reform recommendations and what is being implemented in teacher education programs.

In light of the above, Youngera and Warrington (2007) argue that institutions of higher education need to bridge the gap between research and teaching. The revised standards for Initial Teacher Education and Training (TDA 2007b) do not explicitly mention gender issues, and as such, these topics will not be of priority either for the Training Development Agency (TDA) for School or the Office for Standards in Education agendas. However, the Initial Teacher Education and Training standards are less prescriptive than previous sets of regulations and, therefore, allow for more interpretation and for course leaders to re-engage their students and renowned gender scholars with gender issues within Initial Teacher Education and Training. Youngera and Warrington call for, in the case of England, a re-activation of the gender agenda within Initial Teacher Training and Education in order to reopen the debate. They also note that the gap that exists between research and teaching needs to be bridged if educators are to impact policy-makers and to support newly qualified teachers (NQTs) “to develop their own threshold knowledge of gender equity and gender relational frameworks” (p. 431).

Ohrn and Weiner (2007) claim that despite the invaluable gender research from many educational faculties in England, there is a mismatch, within the same universities, between research and the actual teaching offered on Initial Teacher Training courses. If educators plan to really impact policy and practice, they must fill the gap and support NQTs to build up their own threshold knowledge within gender equity and gender relational frameworks. Otherwise, an informed discussion of gender issues within initial and continuing teacher education in England will remain absent, and the “seductive discourse” (Ringrose, 2007) about high-achieving girls, under-achieving boys and the need to de-feminize primary schooling will be maintained (Youngera & Warringtomb, 2007). The fact that girls earn more successful results in public examination than boys, i.e. the gender

gap, has grabbed the attention of policy-makers across the western world and will go on to hold sway (Martino and Meyenn, 2001; Frank et al., 2003; Weaver- Hightower, 2003; Francis & skeleton, 2005).

Skelton (2007) examines how gender matters are located in the standards set out for the training of teachers. The study specifically examines gender discourses in the recruitment strategies of the TTA which has become lately the Training and Development Agency (TDA). Skelton argues that not unlike other aspects of education in the UK, Teacher training and initial teacher education have become more and more subject to government intervention and scrutiny. In 1994, written policy on initial teacher education programs and equality issues gained more grounds as the Teacher Training Agency (TTA), which subsumed the work of CATE, was established. As Coffey and Delmont (2008) point out, “[g]ender still holds a tenuous and marginal position in a full and time-constrained teacher training curriculum” (p. 81). This has been confirmed by faculty members teaching in initial teacher education programs. Colleagues working on ITE programs feel that the space for raising student teachers’ awareness and understanding has shrunk lately; a thorough inspection of the documents relating to the initial training of teachers show the need for devoting more time to matters of social justice. The Standards for Initial Teacher training set out in the Qualifying to Teach handbook of guidance (TTA, 2004) suggest that gender, together with other sources of inequity of education, are now given a higher profile in ITE documents than at any other time in recent history (Skelton, 2007).

Skeleton informs that the drive to increase the number of men teachers in Australia, that marches ahead of England in its approaches to ‘boys’ debate, has resulted in attempts to “dismantle the Sex Discrimination Act”. According to Mills (2005), the Labor Opposition Party refused to support changes to the Act; however, they admit the need for implementing strategies that attract more male teachers. Smedley and Pepperell (2000) claim that studies and conference proceedings involving interviews with student -teachers on the concept of male teachers in primary schools indicate that both male and female student teachers do not consider gender to be an issue when thinking about their role as teachers.

Skelton (2007) confirms that although the government's drive to redesign the teaching workforce in the UK has challenged perceived gender inequities, the importance of the official voice on gender to the pupils' and teachers' educational experiences has been marginalized.

#### **4. Mainstreaming gender is epistemological and pedagogical**

Pearson et, al. (1993) propose reconstructing education courses and programs in such a way as to incorporate the research findings developed in women's studies. "Mainstreaming" gender studies in education programs are likely to contribute to the general education of student teachers and can help develop the knowledge, skills and dispositions essential to the practice of teaching.

As confirmed in the report of the Experts Workshop on Gender Issues in Education in the Arab Region, the role of educators as change agents in the development of understanding gender and gender relations cannot be denied. "Teachers and educators influence the gender roles of their students thus impacting their educational outcomes. When considering Education for All (EFA) goal 5, which aimed to eliminate gender disparities in primary and secondary education by 2005 and now aims to achieve gender equality by 2015, it should be realized that teachers are a critical force for meeting the goal" (UNESCO, 2009). Allana et, al. (2010) claim that to create gender awareness and minimize gender stereotyping, work should start with the young generation who will lead the change in the future. To do this, we need well-educated teachers who have a sound knowledge regarding gender issues.

What do we mean by well-educated teachers? What do we mean by sound knowledge? How do teacher education programs prepare teachers? What types of knowledge do such programs equip the teachers with? In attempting to respond to these questions, it is worth referring to Freiman-Nemser's Conceptual Orientation Framework, Shulman's PCK and Kennedy's Subject Matter Knowledge.

Freiman-Nemser's (1987) Conceptual Orientations Framework "reflects a coherent perspective on teaching, learning, and learning to teach that



gives direction to the practical activities of educating teachers".The Conceptual Orientations give serious attention to the academic orientation and link the practical orientation with a renewed respect for the "wisdom of practice." Academic Orientation refers to what teachers need to know about their subjects in order to teach them, and where and how they can be helped to acquire and develop that knowledge. Included in this is a broad understanding of the disciplinary roots of school subjects, knowledge about how pupils learn in different subject areas and of effective teaching strategies that promote conceptual understanding. In a similar fashion, Kennedy (1990) focuses on Subject Matter Knowledge, or content knowledge that teachers need, as well as organization and structure of the content and the policies that address subject-matter knowledge.

"That subject matter knowledge plays a key role in effective teaching is conventional wisdom. A teacher who has a weak content base tends to have teaching problems, often misrepresenting content and confusing the learners," Gillette (1993) claims. It is important, however, that subject-matter knowledge be combined with Shulman's (1987) subject-specified pedagogical knowledge or Pedagogical Content Knowledge (PCK).

The general idea is that hopefully all the elements will come together appropriately. Educate America says that "teachers who combine content knowledge and subject-specific pedagogical knowledge with an understanding of the dynamic of diversity, the realities of societal oppression, and the impact of myriad contextual factors on student achievement will increase opportunity for improved educational outcomes for all students." Feminist research supports the idea that collaborative learning, combined with consideration to gender, creates an ideal condition for boys and girls to benefit in an equal way (Beleky, Clinchy, Goldberger & Tarule, 1986).

Along the same line, Shulman's Pedagogical Content Knowledge (PCK) recognizes the need for teachers to acquire two types of knowledge. First, they must master the content, namely, the subject-matter itself. In addition, they must master knowledge of the curricular development. Of particular importance is content knowledge related to the teaching

process, and how best to introduce particular topics or concepts to students. PCK is of special interest because it identifies the distinctive bodies of knowledge for teaching. It represents the blending of content and pedagogy into an understanding of how particular topics or issues are organized and adapted to the diverse interests of learners, and presented for instruction.

Ideally, gender socialization should be integrated into the following theoretical frameworks of education: 1) Freiman-Nemser's Conceptual Orientations, 2) Kennedy's Subject Matter Knowledge, and 3) Shulman's PCK. Gender should specifically be integrated into the Personal and Critical Orientations laid out by Freiman-Nemser.

Freiman-Nemser's Personal Orientation places the teacher-learner at the heart of the process, with an emphasis on learning. As such, learning to teach is related directly to the development and self-awareness of the teacher as an effective tool. The Critical Orientation, by contrast, targets the school context where teachers have societal responsibilities towards students. Teacher educators are charged with showing student-teachers how to bend preconceptions of teaching and transfer of knowledge, and integrate democratic principles into their classrooms. While it is true that school systems can and have perpetuated social inequities, it is also true that teachers hold the power to instigate a change in the social order.

Freiman-Nemser (1987) asserts that the teacher plays multiple roles in the classroom, the school, and the community. First, of course, the teacher promotes democratic values and practices at the classroom level. In the school, the teacher changes policies and develops curricula. At the more global level of the community, the teacher enters the political realm in order to improve educational opportunities. Allana et, al. (2010) notes that teachers, unconsciously, perpetuate gender roles in the classroom. They have different expectations for their students, based on gender. Boys are often encouraged to succeed while girls are left behind. Teachers can thus be seen as promoting cultural values in their students. For this reason, teachers should be made to recognize that their respective actions and approaches will affect a child's gender role. There is a direct relationship

between a student's success in the classroom and his or her preferential treatment, or lack thereof. It is not enough for teachers to be aware of these potential differences in treatment between the sexes. They should also make use of gender-sensitive curricula and resource materials to reinforce gender equality.

Poole & Isaacs (1993) question the ability of student-teachers who are taught in patriarchal environments that provide sexist education to be gender-neutral in their teaching. Trainee teachers are more likely to learn what they have access to and reproduce patriarchal beliefs in their classes. That's why many teachers reproduce conservative attitudes, ideals, beliefs, and values (Bourdieu, 1971; Delamont, 1983).

Wilson (1989), among others, has said that a teacher's developed content knowledge is not enough to ensure the academic success of students (Wilson 1989; Ladson-Billings 1991). Other researchers add that content knowledge alone does nothing to prepare teachers from a socio-cultural majority to perpetuate acceptance of diversity in the classroom (Sadker Sadker 1985; Alquist 1991). Unfortunately, as Grant claims, purposeful training of this kind is absent (Grant, in press). Paine and Weinstein (1989) have found that teachers without training often have preconceptions about teaching and ignore other contextual factors that affect the teaching of their students. The result is that female students do not benefit from the same attention and resources that male students do (Sadker & Sadker, 1985).

In the same way that differences and inequalities can be maintained through tradition and custom, the teaching of the same subjects can have the effect of reproducing gender divisions. Teachers typically perpetuate gender roles in two ways in the classroom. First, teachers may unintentionally neglect girls in the classroom, putting them at a disadvantage compared to boys. This has negative consequences, such as jeopardizing future female students' success since the latter were not academically challenged. Less attention can also lead to female students feeling devalued, causing them to retreat in classroom activity. This second consequence can lead to a third, namely, girls' lack of confidence in the public sphere. To avoid such negative outcomes, teachers should exert serious effort to engage quieter

students, and indirectly, disadvantaged girls in the classroom. It has been shown that when boys and girls feel they are being equally valued, both will be similarly encouraged to actively participate. The second way in which teachers may treat the sexes differently lies in the style of teaching in mixed classes, which may imply that the material itself is more relevant to one sex than to the other.

Chinn and Benne, as far back as 1976, recognized that content knowledge alone cannot bring about change. They argued that one must look into the socio-cultural level as well, whereby institutional norms and teacher orientations can be examined. Changing teacher education to include these factors can lead to the next step of challenging norms at the societal and governmental levels, respectively. Shulman has concluded that enlightened education, as suggested by Chinn and Benne, can manifest itself in ameliorated and more equal relationships between the sexes.

To reiterate, teachers need to be equipped with various types of knowledge beyond the subject-matter itself. They must learn to battle with learning differences and must provide their students with the tools and resources to problem solve. They must be able to engage parents, collaborate with colleagues, and structure appropriate and meaningful student interaction. This brings us back to Freiman-Nemser's Academic Orientation. These ideas are also reinforced in the Personal and the Critical Orientations, and in Kennedy's theoretical framework which stresses subject-matter and knowledge of social norms, as well as the connection between a particular subject and social issues.

Pearson et al. (1993) advocate gender mainstreaming/integration interchangeably since these terms entail the "complete education" of men and women in the restructuring course curricula and course content, and redefining what is meant by knowledge and how it is to be transmitted. Pearson et al. (1993) note that teacher education programs generally consist of four components: 1) general education, 2) specialized knowledge; 3) professional knowledge and 4) practice. The researchers tried to show how gender studies contribute to these four components of teacher education programs. They propose two potential outcomes of

general education that contribute to producing better teachers, namely, open-mindedness and sensitivity. It is crucial to prepare teachers to be open-minded, say the authors, encouraging their students to raise questions about issues they had long taken for granted. This would likely make students challenge their views of the world, thereby becoming more open-minded. A second reason for integrating gender studies into the general education component is that gender studies contribute to teachers' sensitivity to students' needs and interests. There is also a moral dimension to sensitivity, according to the authors. Teachers help students' individuality develop and flourish, improve the quality of their students' lives and enable them to lead worthwhile lives. For teachers to care about the development of their students' personalities presupposes that teachers are able to understand the social conditions that influence their students' circumstances in life (Pearson et al. 1993).

The justification to integrate gender studies into the second component, specialized courses, is that gender integration gives a more complete image of the subject-matter. The third component, professional knowledge, introduces student - teachers to the theoretical foundations of teaching, through such courses as educational psychology, administration, philosophy of education, curriculum, methods of teaching and pedagogy, giving students a greater understanding of education, schools and teaching. Mainstreaming content, argue the authors, has pedagogical implications for both teaching style and methodological approaches. Pearson et, al. (1993) add that research on sex differences is an area of concern, and so is the male standard which informs curriculum development. These arguments must be a central component of teacher preparation programs. Furthermore, the study of women in education has added to the methodology of teaching. Educators today need to prepare teachers who are "effective" and "reflective" about their teaching. Integration of gender studies will, it is argued, contribute to both the above, for teachers who are aware of differences between females and males would likely be more effective teachers. To be able to reflect on one's own teaching presupposes that one has knowledge background to measure present experience against, according to Pearson et, al. (1993). The fourth component, practice, entails implementing the knowledge and skills

acquired in the other three components. If the integration of gender studies into the professional preparation of teachers is justified, then integrating gender into the teaching practice component is an inevitable consequence (Pearson et al., 1993).

### **5. Gender mainstreaming: Cases from different countries**

The Michigan study (Mader & King, 1995) has investigated the extent to which gender studies has been integrated into teacher education programs by looking at thirty teacher education programs in Michigan. Analysis of the Program Survey Instrument has shown that instruction on gender-related issues was not integrated in teacher education programs in any significant way. In most of the programs, a “minimal” amount of formal instruction on gender issues was identified. Analysis of the Student Instrument Survey has confirmed what has been highlighted in the Program survey instrument. However, results show that some pre-service teachers had been exposed to gender issues during training. The study has also exposed differences in attitudes between female and male student-teachers as far as gender issues are concerned. Analysis of the Faculty Survey Instrument has shown that, while gender related instruction was indeed advocated, it was often not taken into account in courses. 7% of the teachers surveyed have reported that they have included gender instruction while 30% have reported that they had not. The inference to be made from Mader & King’s study is that gender-related instruction is lacking in those programs. Even though both teachers and students supported instruction on issues related to gender, they did not know how it related to their class teaching. Mader and King (1995) have found that the lack of gender-related instruction had little to do with such factors as, age, program accreditation, or sex of faculty member. The findings of their research highlight the need for improved gender-related instruction within teacher education programs.

In line with other research, Weist (2007) explored the impact of a new Gender Issues in Education graduate course conducted at a Western University during the Fall of 2004 and 2006. Results have shown that structured preparation in gender issues in education is minimal despite concerns amongst both males and females. The participants reported that gender issues in education in both pre-service and in-service teacher

education programs should be underlined. Deciding what topics should be included in teacher preparation programs is a matter that should be given serious consideration.

Pearson et al. (1993) confirm that “integration and balancing do not mean merely “add women and stir” nor do they mean squeezing the “facts” into existing materials and modes of instruction” (p. 418). Although it is better than nothing, adding one unit to course materials is not integration. Inclusion entails altering the direction of the instructional approach and content since inclusion creates alternative categories, thus allowing one to rethink and transform existing areas of study, such as teaching and learning, achievement, equal opportunity, socialization, ethics, social justice, equity and epistemology, among others. This is also confirmed by Atkins et, al.(1987) who note that mainstreaming does not merely consist of creating specific gender-related classroom material but is also an opportunity for faculty development. Mainstreaming, argue Atkins et al., provides a “legitimate arena in which to address and defuse gender politics in academe” (cited in Pearson et al. p. 418).

Gender is an ideology, ingrained in all aspects of our lives. The distinction between women’s knowledge and men’s knowledge is thus deeply rooted in curricula. For women, this knowledge is traditionally vocational and pertains to the private sphere. The public sphere is reserved for men. Within the curriculum, both content and the structure of schooling and training have been designed with consideration to a male world. Leo-Rhynie et.al. (1999) note that “[s]chool serves as preparation for the public, productive sphere, ignoring the private sphere. Learning for family and personal life has been relegated to the family” (P. 50). They also shed light on the fact that educational reforms in the US has only hinted at teacher preparation and “have paid scant attention to issues of diversity and equity” (Grant & Gillette 1987; Bailey and Campbell 1993). Other reform efforts, like those supported by the Association of Teacher Educators (1991) and the Holmes Group (1990, 1991), do not address the issues adequately considering the diversity of students. In the discussion on education reform, the term diversity (including gender) means anything different from mainstream.

Mills (2005) argues, however, that gender-inclusive policies in schools have been opposed by primary school teachers. A case in point is a gender-inclusive curriculum proposed in Victoria, Australia, which, according to Johnson (2005), has produced a backlash amongst several primary school teachers who failed to realize that gender exclusivity had negative consequences on females' learning. Ozga (2005) also refers to educators who had ignored or undermined gender equity policies. Martino, Mills, and Lingard (2005) argued that teachers' knowledge of gender significantly impact teaching that is often colored by assumptions and stereotypes about the way males learn and respond. Summers, Childs, and Corney (2005) refer to a model of teacher education in 21<sup>st</sup> C England which gives priority to practice-based learning in schools stressing the responsibilities of school mentors. However, it cannot be denied that some mentors' insights into gender inclusivity may be significantly less than those of the trainee teachers under their mentorship.

Poole & Isaacs (1993) explored the relationship between the educators' understanding of gender issues in education and their view on the significance of mainstreaming gender in the curriculum. Interviews were conducted to determine how teachers rated the importance of gender issues and how they dealt with them in the classroom. Most staff stated that gender was given a high priority in their teaching. However, when asked to explain how gender issues were incorporated into their formal teaching, most noted that they used examples from their own experiences, such as stating that no roles in their household were gender-specific i.e. they relied on anecdotal, experiential approach. Although such an approach, as Poole & Isaacs argue, has lots of advantages, it represent gender issues as rooted in experience rather than a theoretical phenomena. The lack of theorizing may make the relationship between gender issues and broader societal concerns invisible. Teacher educators who ignore theory fail to equip their students with the skills needed to challenge the educational school discourse they had been exposed to when at school. Sikes (1991) notes that theoretical issues must be addressed in pre-service teacher education. Student- teachers must be able to reflect on their experiences of home and society, which presupposes that they possess the skills for critical reflection. Sikes fears that unless students are allowed to reflect



critically on their teaching practices, they would likely continue to emulate traditional practices.

Hatton (1988) introduced the concept of “bricolage”, initially developed by Levi Strauss. What is “bricolage”? Hatton defines it as a “heuristic device which might be used in refining causal explanations of teachers’ work” (p.338). Teachers may not have had sufficient theoretical orientation to teachers’ work – argues Hatton, so will likely rely on strategies they had acquired in the teaching situation – strategies which fall short of achieving transformational goals. Hatton goes on to argue that, often, pre-service teachers do not implement gender theories in their teaching, and will tend to use theories that come in handy. The above-mentioned absence of theorizing, particularly within the context of gender, may slow down the process of change in the gender order at teacher education programs.

Students were not particularly interested in matters pertaining to gender, according to the staff’s account. This phenomenon has much to do with the way gender topics are presented to students. Some teachers considered gender crucial to the subject-areas they were teaching, but failed to present gender in a formal way. Other teachers, by contrast, presented gender as a one-time topic in their courses. Others still did not think gender is relevant to their academic purposes.

According to the above study, presenting gender and equity as one out of a number of topics to be covered in a course can be problematic. The authors argue, on the one hand, that inviting a renowned feminist speaker, for example, to deliver a polemic can give the impression that feminism is not mainstream. On the other hand, when students are not given enough time to reflect on gender issues, gender might be marginalized. One may question whether the single-topic approach can potentially challenge established attitudes.

All of the afore-mentioned studies emphasize the need to launch programs that address gender in teacher education and highlight the importance of making a concerted effort to improve gender-related instruction in teacher education programs. Mader & King (1993) recommend, as a first step, that

education departments mainstream gender studies within all aspects of teacher preparation courses. At least one intensive course on gender should be required. Second, discussion on classroom interaction bias and teaching skills should take place. Third, pre-service teachers should reflect on whether principles of gender awareness are being implemented in their teaching. Finally, the participants in the Weist's (2007) study were agreed on the fact that a well-designed course based on current research on gender issues could increase awareness and could improve teaching. Pearson et al. (1993) called for a re-evaluation or reconstruction of knowledge that entails redefining what is meant by knowledge and transforming women into agents of change with gender as an analytical tool basic for its expression.

Since feminist perspectives have not been incorporated into teacher education programs, Malmgren and Weiner (2001) have suggested, in reference to a four-phase strategy at a Swedish university, that there is a need "to disturb the boundaries of thinking about gender among our colleagues and put to rest what was identified as a fear of feminism as a means of challenging prevailing gender conceptions and practices in teacher education" (p. 253).

## **6. Data Collection and analysis**

My aim has been to check whether the universities under study have any policy related to gender at the education departments, whether it is being implemented, and whether there are strategies that ensure its implementation. None of the documents sent by the universities relates to the gender approach; some universities even stated: "we don't have anything". The following are the documents used in the study at hand:

- Vision/mission/program learning outcomes of the teacher education programs in the different universities were collected upon request to check whether they are effective tools in guiding goals, plans and activities as they relate to gender.
- The following course syllabi were also collected from the participating universities: a) One course in educational psychology b) one course in subject matter; c) one course in educational assessment; d) one course in generic instructional methods; e) one subject-specific

methods course; f) one specific methods course in early childhood; and g) one practicum course.

The courses relate to the major components of any teacher education program, such as general knowledge, professional knowledge, methodology, and practicum. It is worth mentioning that I have received only the tabulated material. The aim behind collecting these syllabi is to check whether the department adopted gender-inclusive or gender-biased curricula, teaching methods, training, education material, and projects that are gender sensitive or reinforce traditional sex roles.

Unfortunately, other means of collecting data that would have added reliability and validity to the study findings were not readily available. In the case of the study at hand, data that could have led to more credible findings include class observations, students' projects and portfolios, and interviews with faculty members and students in teacher education programs. Some examples of questions that could have added credibility to the findings are questions that could have addressed faculty members: 1) Do you perceive gender as an issue in class interactions (classroom dynamics)? 2) Do you incorporate gender into your formal and informal teaching or adopt an "anecdotal approach," i.e., is it central or presented as an off-topic (a lecture)? 3) Are students perceived to be interested in gender? 4) Do you or your students use sexist/non-inclusive or non-sexist/inclusive language in the classroom? Some of the questions that could have been directed to students: 1) Are you aware of the gender gap? 2) Do you think gender issues are addressed in the classroom? Etc.

## **II. 1. Data on vision/mission/program learning outcomes**

The first set of data is the mission and program learning outcomes sent by the different universities. Scanning the available material for any sentences that relate to gender integration yielded in underlining few phrases that gender might be embedded in.

There are several Gender Analysis Frameworks that could have been used had the required data been accessible. I have relied on text analysis

instead and tried to analyze some phrases that might reflect any hints to gender integration.

The following are phrases that appeared in the available mission statements/program and learning outcomes and that might indirectly refer to gender; the phrases can be classified into four categories:

**a. Contribute to students' development**

“Provide opportunities for NDU students to develop their intellectual and interpersonal capacities to their full potential.” (NDU mission statement)

“...promoting a commitment to personal professional development and active participation in the professional community. (NDU mission statement)

“directly responsible for the facilitation of the development of the child” (Department of Education mission statement, University of Balamand) “développer chez l'étudiant les compétences académiques, professionnelles et personnelles ». (Faculty of Education mission statement, USJ)

**b. Cater to students' needs**

“develop a good understanding of the purpose and theoretical models underlying these techniques and how to adapt them to their students' needs.” (Department of Education mission statement, Global University)

“knowledge of the learner they will be working with and of the learning methodologies they may possibly choose to adopt.” (Department of Education mission statement, University of Balamand).

**c. Respect Differences**

“The faculty aim to encourage students to...and to work for justice and peace in their world.” (Department of Education mission statement, University of Balamand)

#### **d. Reflect on the teaching/learning situation**

“Reflective practitioners, literate in information and communication technology, and critical thinkers committed to the human and moral values of lifelong learning, integrity, innovation, civic responsibility, and leadership.” (Education Department mission Statement, AUB), Exploring the needs of the educational sector and developing training programs that meet them, needs (Faculty of Education mission Statement, Lebanese University)

Although there is no direct reference to gender in the mission statements/ program learning outcomes, the italicized phrases can be regarded as broad goals that may guide the development of more specific objectives/ learning outcomes. For example, the phrase “develop interpersonal capacities” relates to students’ abilities to interact with others and the different skills they need to function in different contexts. As Stamps (1998) points out, “Relationships, more than information, they determine how problems get solved or opportunities exploited. What this signifies is that the construction of professional knowledge is no longer the solitary pursuit of one individual. Instead, it is a heavily contested process of negotiation among different people with different knowledge bases, different histories, different hopes and aspirations, different personal styles and emotions, and different desires and needs”.

In the phrase, “work for justice and peace in their world,” the word ‘justice’ could include social justice, gender equality and equity, as well as lack of gender discrimination.

Moving on to the phrase “adapt them to their students’ needs,” although the antecedent of the pronoun “them” is unclear, catering to students’ needs is of great importance and can touch on the different needs of male and female students.

As far as the phrase “personal and professional development” is concerned, the terms ‘personal’ and ‘development’, respectively, could be perceived as terms pertaining to male and female identity construction. Gender is a social construct and gender identity is fluid; male/female identities change as a result of interaction with different people from different backgrounds in various contexts.

Although the mission statements / program learning outcomes include broad goals, no predictions can be made as to how these goals translate into classroom teaching situations, curricula, textbooks, student projects etc. that pertain to gender unless the goals are translated into more specific learning outcomes in the course syllabi.

## **2. Data on course syllabi**

The second set of data is the course learning outcomes sent by the different universities. Scanning the tabulated material for any sentences that relate to gender integration yielded in grouping the learning outcomes that might have indirectly hinted on gender.

Learning outcomes collected from the available course syllabi are grouped under four course titles :

### **Educational psychology**

- Understand the cultural, social, emotional and intellectual differences among students which affect the teaching, learning process.
- To study the physical, mental, emotional, social, and moral development of children and youth.

### **Measurement**

- Plan instruction based on knowledge of subject matter, students, and curriculum goals.
- Recognizing unethical, illegal, and inappropriate assessment methods and uses of assessment information.
- Develop predisposition to use alternative assessment strategies when appropriate.
- To identify the role assessment plays in the instruction process to enhance the instructional methodologies to improve learning endeavors.

## **Instructional methodology**

- Understand the central concepts, tools of inquiry, structures of the disciplines taught; provide learning experiences to make them meaningful to students.
- Understand how children learn and develop; provide learning opportunities that support their development.
- Provide a learning environment that encourages positive social interaction, active engagement in learning, and self-motivation.
- Plan instruction based on knowledge of subject matter, students, and curriculum goals.
- Reflect on teaching.
- Describe how children learn and what teaching practices best support their learning.
- Demonstrate how to respect the differences among children and their families throughout the instructional process.
- Write developmentally appropriate learning activities for young children.
- Evaluate the environment for signs of inclusiveness for all participants and their families.
- Evaluate the overall effectiveness of specific activities in meeting developmental goals for individual children in the classrooms.
- Adapt teaching instructions to best meet the needs of all students.
- Create a positive learning environment.
- analyze the different teaching methods relating them to the varied learning styles.

## **Practicum**

- Reflect upon his/her goals and values as a teacher.
- Discuss, evaluate and apply techniques for proactive classroom management and for dealing with discipline problems.
- Reflect the objectives onto the practices he/she is observing so as to link them to the three fields of values, skills and knowledge.
- Etablir une communication avec le groupe/classe et entre les membres du groupe/classe eux-mêmes.

The above mentioned learning outcomes have been classified into the same four categories as the program learning outcomes: teachers respect differences, cater to students' needs, contribute to students' development, and reflect on the teaching / learning situation.

### **Respect Differences**

- "Understand the cultural, social, emotional and intellectual differences among students which affect the teaching, learning process." (Learning outcomes, Global University)
- "Demonstrate how to respect the differences among children and their families throughout the instructional process." (Lebanese University)
- "Evaluate the environment for signs of inclusiveness for all participants and their families." (Lebanese University)

Helping student teachers understand and respect diversity among students reflects positively on the former and the latter. Both become more open-minded and tolerant of the "other". Fostering issues of diversity has shown to benefit both sexes since its primary goal is to draw attention to individual differences and to level the playing field. Educate America says that "teachers who combine content knowledge and subject-specific pedagogical knowledge with an understanding of the dynamic of diversity, the realities of societal oppression, and the impact of myriad contextual factors on student achievement will increase opportunity for improved educational outcomes for all students". This supports Sanders's (2002) claim that "Multicultural education has become a thriving component of teacher education worldwide. Gender equity, however, is in the earliest stages of consideration" (p. 242).

### **Contribute to students' development**

- "To study the physical, mental, emotional, social, and moral development of children and youth." (Lebanese University)
- "Understand how children learn and develop; provide learning opportunities that support their development." (LAU)
- "Write developmentally appropriate learning activities for young children." (NDU)



- “Evaluate the overall effectiveness of specific activities in meeting developmental goals for individual children in the classrooms.” (University of Balamand)

Although gender is not mentioned in the learning outcomes, making student teachers aware of the children’s cultural and social development enhances learning and helps in understanding what girls and boys experience in the development process. Eckert and McConnell (2006) argue that gender is so integrated in our daily life that whatever is gendered seems natural. They note that gender is deeply embedded in our institutions, our actions, our beliefs, and our desires that it appears to us to be completely natural. Gender role socialization starts at home and continues at school as children progress from one level to the other. These children construct their gender identities through interacting with other children, adults, and other factors that contribute to the gender socialization process. Hence, the more the student teachers know about their students, the better they can serve them.

### **Cater to students’ needs**

- “Plan instruction based on knowledge of subject matter, students, and curriculum goals.” (Haigazian University)
- “Adapt teaching instructions to best meet the needs of all students.” (Global)
- “Describe how children learn and what teaching practices best support their learning.” (NDU)
- “Analyze the different teaching methods relating them to the varied learning styles.” (Haigazian)
- “Develop predisposition to use alternative assessment strategies when appropriate.” (Balamand)
- “Create a positive learning environment.” (Lebanese University)

When student teachers are trained to adapt their teaching methods to students’ needs, boys and girls are given the chance to learn in their own ways. Student teachers are made to recognize that actions and approaches will affect a child’s gender role. This applies Freiman-Nemser’s academic orientations that refer to what teachers need to know about their subjects in

order to teach them, and where and how they can be helped to acquire and develop that knowledge. Combining content knowledge with pedagogical knowledge is also advocated by Shulman's PCK. PCK is of special interest because it represents the blending of content and pedagogy into an understanding of how particular topics or issues are organized and adapted to the diverse interests of learners, and presented for instruction. Along the same lines, Pearson et al. (1993) argue that student teachers should be trained to be sensitive to students needs and interests.

### **Reflect on the teaching / learning situation**

- "Reflect on teaching." (Haigazian)
- "Reflect upon his/her goals and values as a teacher." (AUB)

Training student teachers to be reflective is highly recommended especially in teaching / learning situations. Pearson et, al. (1993) confirm that to be able to reflect on one's own teaching presupposes that one has knowledge background to measure present experience against. Teachers who are aware of differences between males and females tend to be more effective in the classroom and are better equipped to reflect on their own teaching.

## **III. Discussion and Recommendations**

The available data clearly shows that mission statements, program learning outcomes and course syllabi have slight potential that pertains to gender. However, the predictions that can be made lead to the conclusion that gender may have simply been added to classroom activities, materials, instruction, etc. as an instructor's personal initiative. Although this is better than nothing, structured instruction on gender issues yields to much better results. Hatton (1988) warns against using what he termed as "bricolage". Teachers may not have had sufficient theoretical orientation to teachers' work, argues Hatton, so will likely rely on strategies they had acquired in the teaching situation – strategies which fall short of achieving transformational goals. Hatton goes on to argue that, often, pre-service teachers do not implement gender theories in their teaching, and will tend to use theories that come handy. The absence of theorizing, particularly within the context of gender, may slow down the process of change in the gender order of teacher education programs.

It is clear, from the minimal available data, that none of the teacher education programs at the different universities integrates gender into its policy, mission, curriculum, or resources. Not unlike the situation in most of the teacher education programs in the world. Hence, it is suggested that gender mainstreaming be implemented. It is important that gender not be added simply as a tag, but permeates all aspects of teacher education programs, especially content and pedagogy. Pearson et al. (1993) argues that gender integration does not mean “add women and stir”, nor does it mean “squeeze facts” into already existing material. Mainstreaming creates alternative categories, thus allowing on to rethink and transform existing areas of study, such as teaching and learning, achievement, equal opportunity, socialization, equity, among others.

In order to mainstream gender, a program must assess the impact of all teaching activities on gender equality/equity. The idea behind gender mainstreaming is to incorporate gender awareness into all aspects of an institution. The efforts made to do this are not merely for the purpose of helping women, but also to balance the opportunities of both sexes. Gender inequalities often go unnoticed in education, even in society, more generally. Societal values provide the norm and frame of reference, and seldom are students able to compare these norms with marked varieties.

## **2. Recommendations**

I second Pearson et al. (1993) and the other scholars referred to earlier and propose gender integration that entails the “complete education” of men and women in reshaping the curriculum and course content, and redefining what comprises knowledge and how it ought to be transmitted. Gender should be integrated in the four components of a teacher education program: general education, specialized education, professional knowledge and practice. The recommended epistemological and pedagogical mainstreaming of gender fits very well into the frameworks of the pioneers on teacher education: Freiman-Nemser, Kennedy and Shulman who argue that teachers need to be equipped with various types of knowledge beyond the subject matter itself. I would like to highlight the integration of gender in Freiman-Nemser’s personal and critical orientations.

Gender awareness and mainstreaming should occur at all levels. One implementation of mainstreaming is the Gender Management System (GMS). The purpose of GMS is to aid institutions of higher education to become actively gender aware and increase the number of women in status positions in academe. GMS also aims at improving policies to foster and promote gender equality.

To mainstream gender using the GMS, higher institutions require an “enabling environment.” The GMS planning cycles have five main phases and a gender perspective needs to be integrated in each phase. First, gender analysis entails analyzing the status of women vis-à-vis men in the teacher education program and examining the impact on women and men of education policy. Second, policy development and appraisal involves establishing gender priorities according to individual institutional circumstances, developing policy options to address gender imbalances, and appraising options to determine their gender impact. Third, gender-aware action plans, the output of policy development, is a plan which should have a clearly defined gender dimension. Fourth, implementation of the engendered work plan which takes place as part of the normal functioning of a department. Fifth, monitoring and evaluation, which involves reviewing key indicators on the status of men and women in the education department and feeding the findings into the next planning cycle (Leo-Rhynie et.al. 1999).

In order to reconstruct the curriculum to account for gender mainstreaming, a thorough process of rethinking what kind of knowledge is valued and how it is taught is required. Stereotyped icons of gender should be eliminated from educational materials/textbooks; for example, materials should show no discrepancies in the portrayal of male and female children and should avoid portraying traditional models of male and female adults. It has been found that women are often portrayed in the home while men are portrayed outdoors, in business, or at school. Further, social studies, literature and history syllabi which were examined reflected values that devalued women’s achievements. Males, by contrast, were overrepresented and shown in a variety of occupations in both textbooks and test materials.

The effect these implications are likely to have on a child's career choice, even his/her aspirations, is not difficult to imagine. It is, therefore, crucial that alternative texts be developed and used, and that teachers be trained to recognize gender disparities in teaching materials. It is important to remember that gender inequalities in education stem from the preconceived ideas of its various stakeholders, not merely the instructors. Parents and students themselves have preconceived, pre-learned notions of gender, as does the career world.

A large part of the change will come about through gender awareness training, with the goal of challenging cultural, gender-related norms. Teachers do not come into classrooms as gender-neutral persons. They are likely to have internalized a patriarchal worldview that impacts the hidden curriculum that is often as influential in classrooms as the official curriculum itself. Frequently, it is the hidden curriculum which ensures that gender differentiated practices, procedures and processes occur in classroom spaces and school structures, even where gender-friendly policies and curricula may exist. The specific needs for such training should be assessed using quantitative and qualitative data, and should be multi-leveled. Training should aim at educators and teachers since they influence the attitudes and behavior of students. Training should aim at achieving several goals; namely, help staff to develop alternative perspectives on gender issues, build capacity in gender analysis, ensure that a gender perspective is included in policy-makers' decision process and allow the framing of appropriate policy guidelines to advance gender equality. With regard to policy intervention, the goals of change must meet the needs of the members and context involved. The aspects to be considered are "the needs in the particular setting, priority considerations, the extent of willingness to change, and resources available to effect the change". In order to effect a change in policy, teacher educators will need the right tools to identify problems/gaps and make appropriate adjustments to policy statements to include gender. Thus, allocation of appropriate resources also comes into play. (Leo-Rhynie et al., 1999).

The following are recommendations that concerned universities can implement to integrate gender in all aspects of teacher education programs:

- Incorporate gender awareness into all aspects of the institution
- Adjust/develop policies that promote gender equality
- Reconstruct curricula to mainstream gender.
- Integrate gender in general education, specialized education, professional knowledge and practice.
- Integrate gender studies research findings in course learning outcomes.
- Implement gender theories in teaching
- Plan structured instruction on gender issues.
- Use appropriate material that is free of gender bias.
- Conduct gender awareness training for staff, faculty members, and students.

## IV. Conclusion

Mainstreaming gender in teacher education programs is a case to defend. Integrating gender into teacher education programs cannot be limited to the epistemological and pedagogical preparation of teachers but has to relate to the micro and macro contexts that these programs live in. Mainstreaming gender studies entails making decisions that relate to the society we want to live in and the ideologies we want to pass to our children. Teachers play a key role in this respect. They are the agents of change!

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