

## Gender Prejudice in School Curriculum: A Case of a Kenyan Primary English Textbook

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### Abstract

*This paper has identified curriculum materials as an area that requires focus and serious analysis as far as gender issues are concerned. It studied a primary class five English text course book from a gender lens. It employed a qualitative content analysis to study a case of curriculum material that should present a gender balance of not only masculinity and femininity but also femininity issues as affecting the Kenyan nation. It sought to answer the questions below: how many significant representations of girls and women are in the texts compared to boys and men? What visible roles are they designed to portray about gender orientations and is gender sensitive language used to balance the skewed societal perceptions or which aspects of the text have complied and conformed to the hegemonistic masculinity? In so doing, the aspects analyzed in this text were gender representation in a text as presented on the cover and title page, topic, subject matter and contents. How are both genders not only represented but also presented neutrally doing, caring family and institutional tasks, how are the employment of gender (in)sensitive language (neuter) used to describe both genders. The findings indicate an adherence to the status quo and evidence of gender biases and stereotypes as far as gender roles and representations are concerned. The study concluded that the case under study was a gender blind text and recommended that further case studies that could generalize their findings be executed across the curriculum, that such texts should be revised to be in tandem with the country's 2011 gender policy document, that a censorship threshold be legislated.*

Keywords: Gender, Gender issues, Gender analysis, Gender roles, Text.

### INTRODUCTION

In Kenyan setting, gender education at school is potentially useful, but textbook content related to gender education has so far received little attention. 'Gender-biased language may adversely affect students and create an oppressive world for them because it is most often unjustified and unfair'. (Cameron, 1990, p. 13). Studies of gender and language have found that 'gender bias and gender stereotypes in written texts and pictures have deleterious effects for female students especially and these effects include feelings of exclusion, devaluation, alienation and lowered expectations (Lesikin, 2001, p. 281). There are a lot of textbooks which represent females only as housewives or show fewer females than males in their texts and illustrations (ibid). English as a Second Language (ESL) and English as a Foreign Language (EFL) curriculum materials reflect the opinions and attitudes of their authors and developers.

Educators are concerned about sexism and writers' attitudes in textbooks because some textbooks may have destructive effects on students' personality (Lesikin, 2001). For example, prevalence of males in the math textbooks may suggest to female students that mathematics is not really for them. A biased representation of female and male can lead to students' sense of what is normal for women and men in our society. In other words, the content of the textbooks help reinforce gender as a social division and perpetuate inequalities between men and women (ibid). 'Experts and authorities in education also believe that the health and mental, social, cultural and scientific growth of every learner depends on a balanced and appropriate system of education'. Books are part of this appropriate curriculum (Kemp, 1977, p. 17). 'The content of the books contains the most essential executive policy for achieving the targets of every educational system. That is why it is essential to develop accurate and scientific-based textbooks' (Lesikin, 2001, p. 281). Textbooks play important roles in determining the educational content and implementation of policy. Thus, they have been the focus of education authorities, textbook designers, researchers and teachers' attention.

Education authorities have suggested diverse criteria for selecting appropriate and efficient content of the textbooks some of which are consistent with and relevant to the sex of the intended learners (Eisner, 1985, pp. 201-202). The content of textbooks is useful and efficient when it is consistent with the learner's age and sex. Therefore, the content of the textbooks, that is, the issues, sentence models and examples must be represented in such a way that both male and female learners feel that they are equally valuable for society. Textbooks should not impose on the readers (students) the idea that male students have more social

prominence than females. However, a glance at the current EFL textbooks reveals a gender-biased approach in the design of the book contents. There seems little balance and equality between male and female students in the content of the textbooks. According to Graci (1989, p. 79), the lack of equality in gender presentation is one of the most frequent problems of published books. Some researchers of ESL textbooks (Porreca, 1984; Lesikin, 2001) among others have shown them to contain gender bias.

It follows then that analysis of the content of ESL/EFL textbooks is of utmost importance if we want to find out whether the content is interesting, offensive, fair or discriminatory (Byrd, 2001, p. 417). Hall & Hewing (2001, p. 1) believe that analysis of content of ESL/EFL books is a key contemporary issue in English language teaching and applied linguistics. However, this area of research has received little attention in the country, especially from social perspectives. Many of the previous EFL textbooks research evaluated the efficacy of the books and their methodology of presentation of materials and exercises rather than social aspects of textbooks (Crawford, 2002, p. 81). The present study sought to identify the relative social prominence of female and male in a Kenyan EFL English language high school textbook. It also attempted to determine the visibility of gender –biased illustrations. Subsequently, this study tried to find answers to the following questions: how many significant representations of girls and women are in the texts compared to boys and men? What visible roles are they designed to portray about gender orientations and which gender sensitive language is used to balance the skewed societal perceptions and which aspects of the text have complied and conformed to the hegemonistic masculinity? In other words, do men enjoy more diversity in their jobs and women are depicted to work in only limited types of occupational roles? This study aimed to explore whether school textbooks contain sufficient knowledge and skills to help children in primary schools and their family members to cope with gender biases.

## REVIEW OF LITERATURE

In the last decade, Ansary and Babaii (2003) explored the status of sexism in current ESL/EFL textbooks in Iran. They performed quantitative and qualitative analysis to examine the manifestations of sexist attitudes and values in two textbooks (Right Path to English I and II) which were locally designed to cater for and respond to the English language needs of Iranian students at guidance schools. They found that ‘women suffered most obviously from low visibility’ (Ansary & Babaii, 2003, p. 69). The ratio of females to males was 1 to 1.4 in the texts and 1 to 1.6 in illustrations. They discovered that of the total 40 topics in dialogues, 27 topics were male-dominated ones.

Lee and Gupta (2009) studied the gender representation in English language textbooks used in Singapore primary schools by examining two basal reader series. The texts were analyzed for discrepancies in the treatment of male and female characters. Imbalance was found in the female: male ratio, in the amount of speech given to characters, and in role –presentation. In both series, the importance of male characters becomes greater as the level of reader rises.

Jackie and Collins (2010) examined whether the later development of awareness of gender issues in Hong Kong compared to Australia is reflected in patterns of gender representation in English language textbooks published in the two countries. A comparison of 10 currently used Australian books with 10 Hong Kong books revealed that such awareness has impacted most on the use of gender- inclusive terms and Symmetrical phrases in both places, they found that Australian writers use generic *they* while their Hong Kong counterparts preferred either the coordination *he* or *she* or ‘generic’ *he*. Both sets of writers maintained the convention of male-first presentation, depicted women in a more limited range of social roles, and presented stereotyped images of women as weaker and more passive than men, and as operating primarily within domestic domains. The visual representation also reinforced roles. Hong Kong textbook writers nevertheless, paid more heed to the inclusion of females visually. The duo wondered whether textbooks should reflect reality or lead social change and strive for gender equality,

Amanda and Sakwab (2012) study reported how an English language textbook commonly used in Ugandan secondary schools reinforces gender stereotypes which are prevalent in society. In the mixed methods investigation, their qualitative use of critical discourse analysis and documentary analysis elicited the data which were quantitatively analyzed using Porecca’s framework for the analysis of English as a second Language textbooks of gender representations in English in Use Book 2 by Grant and Wangombe, a textbook recommended by the Ministry of Education for teaching English to students aged 14-15 in Ugandan schools. They found out that positive female role models are under-represented and that the

language of the text is not inclusive of the females. The duo concluded that the content of such books and the way they are mediated in the classroom, undermine the Ugandan government's commitment to equity and inclusion.

However, it is significant to note that in Kenya, such studies on gender representations in texts have been rarely carried out yet according to the National Gender Policy document (2011), in spite of women being 50.29182% of the total population and accounting for a large voting population in Kenya, glaring gender gaps continue to confront them in terms of representation in decision making sites, in accessing and controlling resources and socioeconomic opportunities. There are very few reports that have considered how knowledge about gender parity and equal representations in curriculum content materials are presented and fewer studies have analyzed the content of textbooks used in schools to assess gender education messages delivered at school through textbook analysis hence the reason for the current study. One such study by Malava (2012) examined the portrayal of gender roles in secondary school English textbooks using 'New Integrated Approach series' published by Jomo Kenyatta Foundation. The findings indicated under-representation of male gender in authorship. The findings revealed that the male gender outnumber the female gender in usage of character portrayal in photographs and firstness in dialogues. The study showed that the New Integrated English textbooks have tried to use gender inclusive, neutral, gender sensitive language in a few cases. The study recommended training of education stakeholders on gender issues, developing elaborate assessment checklists for identifying gender stereotypes in textbooks and development of a more gender inclusive curriculum where men and women are equally represented in all areas.

## **METHODOLOGY**

A qualitative content analysis was employed in this study because it is an approach of systemic, rule guided most suitable for text analysis (Mayring, 2014).

### **Material Selection**

This was a single, textbook-case study. The researcher selected standard five New Progressive Primary English (NPPE) pupil's book that was used for primary school pupils across the country based on the new syllabus. A class five book was selected as it provided grounding after a transition level from lower primary to upper primary English. Having been in upper primary for just one year, the pupils begin to mature in English language studies and at this level, they begin to critically absorb gender messages in book contents.

### **Data Collection Procedures**

The researcher collected information about this textbook from the Orange book KIE (2014) containing all approved curriculum materials by the Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development and availed in schools. The textbook was obtained from a bookshop after establishing its use as a course book in many public schools. This textbook series is used in public schools from standard one to eight and the publisher has other series in all subjects taught at primary and secondary levels. The NPPE was first published in 1999 and has been reprinted severally throughout the 2003-2012 and the most current edition is the 2013 copy used in this study.

To collect the data for this study, the researcher went through the following procedures. First, the textbooks were selected and examined in depth. This step of content analysis is called mass observation the result of which is a newly categorized premise (Cohen & Manion, 1992). In content analysis tradition, the investigator has to do two mass observations: the first one is done after choosing the textbook purposely to have a general look at the textbook to ascertain that the document contains the information the researcher is investigating. After the approval, the investigator divided the textbook contents into different divisions, such as occupational roles, social activities, etc., and then carried out the second mass observation of the content analysis which was purposely done to modify the original premise which had been formulated before categorizing, such as occupational roles and home chores (ibid). After the two observations, the original premise and purpose of the study were modified slightly and different categories were chosen for investigation. Finally, when there was a difference between the first review and the second one on identification of representations and descriptions of gender roles and visibility, the researcher re-examined the textbook for a solution to reduce the categories to five; stereotyped sex roles, male and female job types, sex based activity types, masculine generic constructions and male and female visibility in illustrations and texts, gender language and gender occupation roles.

## **Data Analysis Procedures**

In examining this book, the researcher reviewed the cover page and all the 27 topics including the 3 revision units. The subject matter contents of the textbook were studied and representations and descriptions about gender roles and visibility by seeking gender neutral, gender assertive language and gender sensitive illustrations and passages that corresponded to masculinity and femininity in the text were identified.

To analyze the data the researcher coded sex or gender illustrations in terms of pictures indicating sex or gender in the text. Also coded was the language use that was related to, but not synonymous with sex and gender such as sexual orientation and marital status in passages. The intent of this coding was to assess the extent to which any sex or gender roles, jobs, activities and language use was taking place in the text.

These were either, highlighted, emboldened or italicized and underlined in the text to ease identification. A unit by unit content analysis was done to study the content for various categories. Additionally, the researcher examined whether the identified descriptions and illustrations addressed the key messages presented in key documents such as the Republic of Kenya National Plan of Action to implement the National Gender Policy of 2008 - 2012, Gender in Education (2007) and the Gender Policy document (2011). These documents have been used elsewhere to assess gender situation knowledge in the country. Although there are three key messages pertaining to gender roles in this textbook, the general approach was to conceptualize the eminence of illustrations and descriptions recognizing that gender-specific interventions can target women exclusively; men and women together or only men, to enable them participate in and benefit equally from development efforts.

Also as a qualitative analysis, the inferences underlying messages of text based on the presence or absence of some evidence in the text were presented. Qualitative analysis allowed the following categories (a) stereotype sex roles (b) Male/female job types, (c) sex-biased activity types, (d) masculine generic constructions e.) Visibility

## **FINDINGS/DISCUSSION**

Authored by the Oxford University Press in 2013, the book is a class five New Progressive English primary course book. The cover reveals a sensitivity to gender issues which reflects the extent to which the curriculum developer attempts to address the disparity and gender biases typical in school texts. It is divided into 27 teaching and 3 revision units. The text is structured to present the teaching points and followed by activities and tasks for practice. The pictures are used to illustrate most of the concepts on grammar, stories, sentences, and vocabulary. All these features have attempted a fair amount of gender balance. A snapshot of the book may present it as a 'gender awake' text although an in-depth examination proves otherwise. Below is a detailed analysis of each aspect of the textual perspective on gender categories.

### **Stereotype Sex Roles**

Stereotype sex roles is evident in unit 3, page 14, titled, 'Wakesho helps her grandmother' where a man is pictured along side a female and male child next to a water tap. The man seemingly is on a patronage. In the conversation discourse, Chelangat and her mother exchange past experience of fetching water from long distances and from tanks and taps. The bottom line is that water fetching is a traditional gender role. In the passage, Wakesho's intelligence is questioned when she passes her home in the evening after realizing she had taken too long to buy whatever from the market and falling asleep in the matatu. When she finally finds her way home, she realizes she is nearer her grandmother's home and proceeds to visit her. She finds her sick and nurtures her responsibly. As much as she acts responsibly by nursing her ailing grandmother, it is not lost on readers that what she does is a traditional female role. The story in the passage extols male intelligence as it presents Wakesho's brother taking the initiative to look for her and even reporting to the police. When she resurfaces, her mother hugs her and cries- typical of the emotional woman.. However, on page 17, Rachel's picture is isolated though eminent and her kinsmen and women are described in the passage in an equal measure which is positive representation. This balances the skewed gender orientation examined earlier.

Unit 11, page 56 has a neutral representation of both genders in a pictorial presentation. A boy and a girl are looking at an AIDS information communication material containing men and women. The poetic passage and the conversation reveal that both men and women are vulnerable to AIDS. However, the fun spot page on page 59, presents a picture of a girl Kibibi (serving a boy). The passage tells a story of a girl Asha who serves a boy, Omamo in a dirty room and place. Though the context emphasizes hygiene, why should a girl serve a boy and not the other way? This constructs the gender roles as reflected in the African society where women have always served food to males.

Unit 13, page 66 pictures a woman picking tea but the reality is that both genders do this and presenting a woman as a farmer only serves to place the female gender to an indoor role. Further, a boy who provokes a squirrel is pictured on page 69 while working in a farm. Why is a man not presented at the home environment? Probably it is because children and women belong in homes. Kanyotu the boy is a male figure and is presented as a solution maker. According to the passage, the boy Kanyotu pushes sticks into a squirrel's hole and only runs away when the squirrel jumps into his trouser. The conclusion made is that boys are adventurers, brave and courageous.

In unit 14, page 70 and 72, two women and a girl are pictured. The women are carrying buckets of water and the accompanying passage describes the drought. Fetching water is a traditional role of women and girls in an African setting. The small school girl claims that a book belongs to her. The girl is pictured as a pupil. The fun spot passage on page 73 pictures and personifies hare and hyena as males outwitting each other to own a herd of cattle. Among some African communities cattle ownership is a sign of wealth used for dowry payment. Men are thus presented as wealth owners.

Unit 15 page 74 and 75 male soldiers are pictured firefighting. The accompanying passage is a story of a boy, Tito discovering fire razing the staffroom while a female teacher, Mrs. Mutune is in class. Although she removes students to safety, it is the male principal who calls the ambulance and the army to put out the fire. In the end it is Tito who is congratulated and promised a bright future in the firefighting career. The scenario presents the two males as not only brave but problem discoverers and solution seekers. While the heroic Tito discovers a problem, the male head teacher seeks the solution. The next pages: 76, 78, and 79 are predominantly positive pictorial representations of the male gender. On page 76, two males are pictured in a fire station, one inside a firefighting engine. Page 78 presents a male chef while page 79 presents four males; two are prison warders and one is a young male prisoner Kigo, seeking his way out of a prison only to end in another. The fourth is a male pilot whose plane flies into birds at 700 km/hr but no injuries reported. The male gender is presented as involved in outdoor professions such as firefighting, hospitality and aviation industry, and security.

Unit 26, entitled, 'Patience is...' "There are 2 females, a mother and her daughter and a male, a boy on page 132. On page 133 there is a picture of 1 male and female standing side by side with the mother holding a baby. This places the mother in a home and baby care position as it is in the society. The accompanying passage on pages 132-133 begins with "Patience, wait for mother to cook" thus continues with the gender construction in the society of women as belonging to the kitchen. Page 135 presents three pictures of a man under a shade in the fun spot section, a man taking breakfast, a male butcher and a female buyer. The representation enhances the woman in a home care and indoor activity of preparing food while the man is outside there refreshing and recreating.

Unit 29 page 144 presents a man and a woman in a Hindu wedding. On page 146, there are 5 pictures where a woman cleans up a place; two women prepare to serve food, while the other decorates the house. The other two pictures present two boys dancing and cooking respectively. There is fair gender visibility representation in the ratio of 4:4 but women major in the home care role while only a picture presents males and boys as such in the same role of cooking. The fun spot on page 147 has a picture of a man and a captive girl. The accompanying story presents the girl as clever leading to her escape.

Units 11, 19-21, 25, 27 and 29, women are almost equally and favorably portrayed in terms of their visibility, and gender roles. This perhaps presents the changing world and the gains made through gender affirmative frameworks in the country. Of the many studies reviewed, Deliyanni-Kouimtzi (1992) explored the occupational roles of men and women in Greek primary school books and found that these textbooks contained more working women after principles of gender equality were applied in education. However,

only 13.6% of women were portrayed as paid workers as opposed to 53.2% of men (p.77). This reflects the progress made so far.

The male gender is presented in superior position of power, leadership and control as opposed to women's homecare status signifying domesticity. However, there are representations of de-gendered roles depicting pictorially girls and boys, men and women in equal ratio though they are fewer. For instance, men cook on page 146 and women teach page 139 thus exposing both genders to real world without confining the woman/girl to the traditional home environment. This attempt at gender balancing is marred by tying girls and women to traditional roles outside home. There is an instance of female tailors and cleaners on the street on page 46 using primitive tools while men use modern tools. Girls and women are depicted as concerned with choosing dresses as in page 132-133 portrays authors' insensitivity in deconstructing gender roles.

Hartman and Judd (1978) found that the ESL materials reflected sexist attitudes and values. Occupational roles for women were traditional and limited just as reflected in this study. They also found that masculine generic construction were used more often than feminine generic constructions in the textbooks [www.sciedu.ca/elr](http://www.sciedu.ca/elr) English Linguistics Research Vol. 1, No. 1; 2012 Published by Sciedu Press 44 ISSN 1927-6028 E-ISSN 1927- Generally, the textbooks stereotyped sex roles including the over-emotional female; house work and child care as female-exclusive domains; Women were portrayed as superficial, while men were cast as helpful and patronizing (Hartman & Judd, 1978, p. 390-391) Women's limited roles may contain the writers' worldview. A worldview perpetuates certain social values and norms attached to both gender and it shapes expectations about what types of jobs males and females should do and how they should do them. One other possible reason why female occupation is limited may be attributed to stereotypes. The negative cliché and perceptions based on falsehoods and generalities have been around us for thousands of years and influences each generation. Women tend to be placed in a limited series of roles as mothers, housewives, tailors and nurses. Nonetheless, these clichés are obsolete gender stereotypes today. Everyone knows that girls do not have to be housewives but can be leaders and firefighters, whilst men can nurse babies without shame. The publishers and authors have presented females having limited occupational roles because they may have been influenced by these baseless truisms. If females believe them, they eventually become nurses or tailors and they may be deprived of becoming firefighters, doctors or engineers. Similarly, the findings concur with Jackie and Collins (2010) study which also depicted women in a more limited range of social roles.

### **Male/Female Job Types,**

Unit 7 presents a passage entitled, "Boazi's first day at the office." Boazi is a new male officer received by a male manager. So the message could be simply that a manager's portfolio is a preserve of the male gender.

Unit 12, page 60 has the picture of a pastoralist woman tethering a camel which is part of their role among the nomads and the pastoralist in Kenya. The passage on this unit on page 61 has three male characters arguing about the benefits of a cow to a man. The insinuation is that cows are important because they are used to pay dowry which is currently a debatable gender issue in Kenya. The rest of the passage extols the gendered male occupations of drumming, and shoemaking. On page 62, there are two females pictured, a mother Mrs. Okwiri and her daughter. The extended passage on page 65 presents a pastor running away from the pulpit because swam of bees has attacked while his congregation of men and women are pictured following suit. The point is made though that it is the male to be a pastor as the saying goes, men of clothe is an expression referring to clergy, a preserve of the male gender.

In unit 15, there are six people pictured on page 80. The male to female ratio is 5:1. The passage presents them in a neutral light except that the boat driver and other adventurers' occupants are male with only a girl amongst them.

Unit 17 page 84-85 is on a visit to Matunda Cannery where class 5 pupils in the company of their science teacher, Mr. Kisa tours a manufacturing factory. While it is positive that a girl Chebet poses an intelligent question to the workers, the workers are 100% men. There are 7 men pictured doing various jobs and no woman. This casts the male gender positively because girls are perceived to fear science and mathematics and would not be found in such an outdoor activity as working in a factory. Furthermore, why

should the science teacher not be a female one? On page 89, a woman is pictured pounding something in a traditional home set up. This confirms that women are home makers and are confined to a home environment.

In unit 18 entitled, 'When I grow up,' there is a picture of a male scarecrow in a wheat farm and right below it, is a picture of a female tailor. Benta's ambition in corresponding passage is to be a tailor because she thinks she doesn't know math. This presents tailoring as a feminine occupation left for minds that are not good at math and sciences

### **Sex-Biased Activity Types**

Unit 5 entitled, "Sakita and the bicycle" has an equal pictorial representation of a man and a woman on page 26 who had gone to the market and the story of two girls; Tabitha and Sakita learning to ride a bicycle. Sakita has an accident and has a lot of pain but shows it to no one which is contrary to societal expectations of a girl's behavior. However, considering that on page 12, a picture of a boy who gets a car accident is not very conspicuously presented, one can conclude that a girl's accident is with a less superior technology compared to the boy to insinuate inferiority among the female gender.

Unit 7, on page 39, a young boy who fails to hang his mother's call and cut it by returning the receiver is pictured together with his mother. This ridicules the boy Mambo but at that age, boys are expected to experiment and venture a lot hence it is a feat. The absence of a young female experimenting with technology sends the wrong signal of females and their fear of technology.

Unit 8 has the title, "Etu is buried". There are two sets of pictures on page 40, namely: A and B. A has people making merry with the ratio of male to female being 5:4 respectively. B has mourners in a procession as 5 men carry the coffin led by two other males, presumably a pastor and his assistant. The conclusion drawn is that females are associated with fun and partying while they stay away from difficult matters of life and death. On page 41, the majority mourners who are pictured beside the grave as the coffin is lowered are all male except 3 females. In the accompanying passage, it is Mrs Etu's weakness and emotions before death that are pronounced as the males busy themselves to organize his funeral. This clearly defines the gender activity types about men and women.

Unit 9, entitled "The clean-up" has a pictorial presentation of 2 females and 4 males engaged in a clean up exercise. This portrays a typical presentation of work between the genders since more males are associated with outdoor activities as compared to fewer females. However, the passage has a positive action because it is a woman who takes the initiative to successfully mobilize men and women to clean the Ngaza city. On page 51, there is a picture of a school girl at the door and the persona is complaining that the little girl soils the carpet and has no business in the house yet in reality it is the boys who would always play without regard for cleanliness.

Unit 10, page 55, there is a picture of a male lying down perhaps signaling the nature of the male gender's preoccupation with recreation.

In unit 18 entitled, 'When I grow up,' there is a picture of a male scarecrow in a wheat farm and right below it, is a picture of a female tailor. Benta's ambition in corresponding passage is to be a tailor because she thinks she doesn't know math. This presents tailoring as a feminine occupation left for minds that are not good at math and sciences. On page 93, there is a group of male footballers pictured and a mixture of male and female spectators. It is apparent that the ration of men exceeds women.

Unit 21, page 104, 105 is a personified donkey whose gender is neutral. There is a boy and a master in the passage, both are male. The boy is pictured lashing at the donkey. This is an imbalanced representation. On page 107, there are 5 females and 5 males pictured doing all sorts of things which is a fair gender representation. One girl writes a letter, the other sewing a dress while the other three, order food and drinks. Two males are ordering foods and drinks, another writes a letter and of the other two, one cuts a tree and the other is a barber. The female here is still portrayed in an indoor activity like tailoring. However, on page 109, there are two males, kobokobo and his son and no female. Kobokobo and his son are negatively represented as stupid and blind followers of people's advice but are definitely portrayed in an outdoor activity.

Unit 22 page, page 112 there is a picture of a man who has photographed a lion just above him on a tree, a mark of bravery. Page 114 has 6 pictures all of whom are males pointing to an imbalanced representation.

Unit 27, on page 139, there are five pictures with a total of five females and 5 males. This is equal pictorial illustration. The first picture is a female teacher with her 2 male pupils and a female pupil. The second is where a girl is brushing her teeth, the third is a mother commanding her son to go to bed and the last is where a man sends a boy to a drug dealer as insinuated in the accompanying passage.

### **Masculine Generic Constructions**

Unit 1 page 2 has 6 pictures of male facial expressions for communication against 0 females. The six men are named thus: Maneno, Matata, Omoremu, Shaka, Omuri and Muvoreri. It is interesting to note that on the same page, the reading passage's main character is a girl named Moraa sitting between two men on her journey to school. Even though one may appreciate the representations of the two gender realities, one would still question why Moraa is pictured sitting amidst 2 males who end up manipulating her in a bus on page 3. The message seems to suggest that older males will always outwit younger females for their selfish gains and girls and women should be careful. This perpetuates traditional gender views of women as being weak, vulnerable and naïve. Indeed, on page 7, the ideology is established when a picture of a man carrying a lion on his shoulder is portrayed as 3 boys argue about their father's achievements and prowess in a passage: one father is the fastest football player in the world while the other father can shoot an arrow to a tree, run and intercept it mid-flight. The third father, can catch a lion, tame it and take it home as a pet. These findings resonate with Hartman and Judd (1978) who reviewed several then-current TESOL textbooks and examined the images of women and men, the order of female-male mention, and stereotyped roles for females and males. They found that women were underrepresented in the textbooks; the worst ratio of males to females was 73 percent to 27 percent. In general, throughout the textbooks, stereotyped sex roles were rampant, including the passive, weak female children; and active, bold male children (Hartman & Judd, 1978, p. 390-391).

In unit 2, on page 8-9 Kabetu and Sidi are respectively designated gender personalities of male intelligence as opposed to female naivety when Kabetu is pictured calling the police on phone to arrest robbers as his cousin Sidi merely looks on in fear insinuating she is playing second fiddle to the boy. The accompanying passage tells this story candidly.

On unit 3, page 19, there is a pictorial representation of personified female insects; a louse and an ant to whom feminine gender is attributed. The two insects argue and prepare for a beauty contest. This presents the stereotypical preoccupation of women and girls with beauty at the expense of major issues of the day. Indeed the reading passage on this unit is a poem on ageing and a frail granny is pictured washing her face with a white liquid which turns out to be milk. Her aging process is described negatively and as contradictions. For example, the cup she is holding in her hand is the same one she is looking for under the bed, she puts salt in the tea instead of sugar e.t.c. In short, the aging poem depicts the female gender stereotypically and characteristically as nagging, imbecile, weak, forgetful and stupid in old age. This presentation of women and mentioning of age is always an unwelcome gesture in the female circles and perpetuates gender stereotypes. In an investigative study by Peterson and Kroner (1992) on gender bias in textbooks for psychology and human development, they demonstrated that females were frequently portrayed in negative and gender-biased ways (pp. 34-35) as confirmed in this study.

On page 22, unit 4, there is a picture of both school boys and girls visiting a circus. Girls are not given any meaningful roles and together with the boys watch excitedly and are thrilled to see a man eating fire, a dog climbing a tree, and a monkey riding a bicycle. Page 25, has a picture of a male named Katu, presented as a renowned, daring and superior mountain climber. Males are more visible than females in this unit just as Arnold-Geritty (1978) suggests.

Unit 6, entitled, "Does your matatu go to Kisasi" illustrates a male conductor and remotely pictured passengers. The passage on the same unit however, presents a young girl, Asha who meets a rude man in the vehicle. A woman with a baby enters and Asha evacuates her seat for her. She offers to carry the rude man's bag thinking it is Asha's. The rude man grabs his bag and alights. He is roughed up by other men pictured on page 31 who think he is a thief but is saved by Asha as three other women simply look on. This unit presents women as helpless and weaker gender that is vulnerable to the whims and powers of

men. On page 35, a picture of a man and a woman is presented on a table. The message in the passage shows that the woman is preoccupied with food which makes her husband hungry.

On page 45, unit 8, a boy Lokiti steals an egg but before he cooks it, his mother discovers when he sits and breaks the egg that diffuses a foul smell. The passage presents the boy as naughty which is the expectation of the society. However, in a poem about “the dead and the living,” the poetic character is a female who gets out discovering whether the living could outnumber the dead. And when she died, she left a note stating that she is gone to count the dead. It sounds philosophical and ridiculous though the thought is apparently a mark of intelligence. Such representation is slightly objective and balanced.

Unit 12, page 65 has another passage and picture of a man unraveling a puzzle of getting his sweet potato, goat and a leopard across a river because he can only carry one at a time. This presents men as problem solvers and thinkers in the society. Unit 15, on page 83, two boys are pictured heroically swimming in a crocodile infested river and evades a crocodile attack.

In unit 18 entitled, ‘When I grow up,’ there is a picture of a male scarecrow in a wheat farm and right to show male figures authority in protection and security. The scarecrow has to be a male to exercise power; male images are enough to scare birds and animals from the farm. Unit 19, page 94 and 95, there is a passage on Fashion Show that personifies 6 animals crocodile (she), hyena (He), Giraffe (she), ostrich (he), leopard (she), and hare (he). Their gender representation is in the ratio of 3:3. The gender of the commentators and the judges is neutral. This is a fair representation of both genders in a curriculum material. On page 99, the story of Nyalulu, a female presents a timid and fearful girl who screams at the top of her voice because of a soft rattling sound of a trail of toilet paper roll. There are 2 females and 2 males in the picture. This is a neutral representation though the fun spot passage casts the female gender in a negative light.

Unit 22 page 112 there is a picture of a man who has photographed a lion just above him on a tree, a mark of bravery. Page 114 has 6 pictures all of whom are males pointing to an imbalanced representation. Page 115 has two boys pictured to illustrate how to survive a crocodile and a rhino attack respectively. A boy holds tight the mouth of a crocodile and the other stands still in front of a rhino. The two are represented as brave.

Unit 23 page 119 presents Mwambao, a male pictured walking in the forest alone. This is a mark of bravery. In unit 24, entitled, ‘What an Amazing sight,’ there are two males against 2 females pictured on page 122. On page 125, a man is pictured bravely carrying a panga (machete) and ready to strike a young boy pictured, only to realize that it is his son who had frightened him. Page 127 fun spot has a picture of a boy with his dog in tow. All this extols bravery.

Unit 27 page 136 has a passage on the famous Giriama legend, Mekatilili wa Menza, a Giriama hero who led them to war against the European. This gives the woman a positive attribute but its representation is in the context of mythical narratives which mystifies the female ability. Unit 28 is entitled, “The Ostrich”. It has a story picture of a man being chased by a lion but when he climbs a tree near a dam for safety, he meets a snake and saves himself by diving into the dam. This is a heroic act. Back in school Tito, pg 74 and the head are the rescuers who discover the fire and call the firefighters signifying masculinity. These scenarios indirectly reveal the position of the girl/woman as an underdog under the protection of male superiority and domination.

### **Visibility of Genders**

Unit 4, pages 20,22, 25, there are pictorial presentations which predominantly portray the male gender as achievers. There are 7 males ranging from 4 young boys, middle aged man on a mountain peak and two elderly males. The accompanying passage explains the pictures and represents all the males as recognizable achievers since independence (1963) through 1998 as seen in the captions. 4 boys climb Mount Kenya successfully, Munyao Kisoi, the man who mounted the Kenyan flag on mount Kenya and in politics, a former president of Kenya, Daniel Moi bestows honor upon Munyao for his feat. Even the naming of the three peaks on Mt. Kenya is after male achievers of the Maasai community of Kenya, namely; Batian, Nelion, and Lenana. The passage is also completely dominated by boys and even the teacher is a male. Similarly, Arnold-Gerrity (1978) in another study performed a content analysis of a 1976 series of primary school reading textbooks, examining the visibility of female characters. She discovered that for grades one

and two, there were twice as many male-oriented stories as female-oriented ones in the first four textbooks. In grades three and four, male-oriented stories were five times as frequent, and in the two textbooks for grades five and six, there were three times as many male-oriented as female-oriented stories.

The illustrations, messages in units 18, 23-24, 26, and 28 confirm an earlier study by Ansary and Babaii (2003) who explored the status of sexism in current ESL/EFL textbooks in Iran. They found that 'women suffered most obviously from low visibility' (Ansary & Babaii, 2003, p. 69). The ratio of females to males was 1 to 1.4 in the texts and 1 to 1.6 in illustrations. They discovered that of the total 40 topics in dialogues, 27 topics were male-dominated ones. Similarly, Peterson and Kroner (1992) investigated gender bias in textbooks for psychology and human development and demonstrated that representation of work and behavior of males significantly exceeded the representation of females. Females on the other hand, were frequently portrayed in negative and gender-biased ways (pp. 34-35).

The text thus presents an almost equal number of women and girls to remedy this 'oversight'. The pictures powerfully illuminate gender images than statements for children at this level (Std. 5). We may accept that the attempt to show both genders in school page 139 consistently is a reflection of some extent to which gender realities have changed. At school there are both male and female teachers. Never the less, patriarchy is portrayed in the text with girls presented in captive situations such as Wakesho kidnapped in unit 3 and 29 the chief's daughter.

From the content unit 11-17, the males are more than thrice visible than females and are portrayed in masculine and outdoor activities compared to their female counterparts. This resonates with Arnold-Gerrity (1978) study examining the visibility of female characters. She discovered that for grades one and two, there were twice as many male-oriented stories as female-oriented ones in the first four textbooks. In grades three and four, male-oriented stories were five times as frequent, and in the two textbooks for grades five and six, there were three times as many male-oriented as female-oriented stories. She also found that men were portrayed four times in many well paying occupations compared to women and that the females were most frequently portrayed in home chore roles of motherhood, occupied with household tasks and serving their families as either mother or wife.

Unit 15 is dominated by males and females are invisible. Page 74 and 75 male soldiers are pictured firefighting. The accompanying passage is a story of a boy, Tito discovering fire razing the staffroom while a female teacher, Mrs. Mutune is in class. Although she removes students to safety, it is the male principal who calls the ambulance and the army to put out the fire. In the end it is Tito who is congratulated and promised a bright future in the firefighting career. The scenario presents the two males as not only brave but problem discoverers and solution seekers. While the heroic Tito discovers a problem, the male head teacher seeks the solution.

The next pages: 76, 78, and 79 are predominantly positive pictorial representations of the male gender. On page 76, two males are pictured in a fire station, one inside a firefighting engine. Page 78 presents a male chef while page 79 presents four males; two are prison warders and one is a young male prisoner Kigo, seeking his way out of a prison only to end in another. The fourth is a male pilot whose plane flies into birds at 700 km/hr but no injuries reported. The male gender is presented as involved in outdoor professions such as firefighting, hospitality and aviation industry, and security.

Unit 21, page 104, 105 is a personified donkey whose gender is neutral. There is a boy and a master in the passage, both are male. The boy is pictured lashing at the donkey. This is an imbalanced representation. On page 107, there are 5 females and 5 males pictured doing all sorts of things which is a fair gender representation. Unit 22 page 112 has a picture of a man who has photographed a lion just above him on a tree, a mark of bravery. Page 114 has 6 pictures all of whom are males pointing to an imbalanced representation. As far as visibility is concerned, the current study confirms Amanda and Sakwa (2012) discovery and Malava (2012) finding that female role models are under-represented in the texts and suffers low visibility and that male members outnumber the female gender as used in illustrations.

### **SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION**

This study has explored the textual reality created by one case of a curriculum material used in the classroom process in terms of gender presentations. It has raised issues that seem to dog the effective gender balance initiatives as far as teaching and learning materials are concerned. At the center of this discussion

are the print texts and content analysis with regard to specificities such as gender representation in texts such as pictures and images, activities and tasks, examples and illustrations. It has looked into appropriateness of the text as a gender instrument in the hands of teachers and learners to address gender issues and concludes that more needs to be done including gender mainstreaming if the society is to wake up to the realities of gender imbalances. This study confirms other scholars' claim that curriculum materials may be replete with various kinds of prejudice and negative attitudes toward different groups of people, i.e, women, children, the old, the disabled and so on. It purposed to investigate gender consciousness in a primary five school textbook authorized by the government of the Republic of Kenya. The findings of the study indicated that: a) Males and females work in restricted occupational but stereotype sex roles b.) Males and females are represented in the textbook performing male and female job types c.) Both genders are depicted in typical sex-biased activity types d.) Men are presented in masculine generic constructions and e.) Men are more visible than women in illustrations and passages. The gender constructions conform to societal expectations about male and female roles, jobs and activities which reduce women to indoor home based visibility while men are given exposure in outdoor activities.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

The findings are of great interest to curriculum developers and publishers who are charged with the responsibility of implementing curriculum and they should be made more aware on strategies of improving the quality of gender equality in the content and pictures of the school textbooks.

Curriculum designers should utilize this study to review the critical biasness against either gender in the illustrations and passages of school texts during curriculum material evaluations. In brief, syllabus designers are advised to ensure equilibrium between male and female character representation, occupational roles, social activities, and the visibility of males and females when selecting school texts.

The researcher recommends that such texts should be revised by publishers to be in tandem with the country's 2011 gender policy document and that a censorship threshold be legislated to the same effect. Further case studies that can generalize findings should also be executed across the curriculum to evaluate the extent to which publishers of school texts address gender biases.

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