



INTEGRATING GENDER EQUALITY INTO EDUCATION AND TRAINING SECTOR OPERATIONS

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INTRODUCTION

This Technical Guidance Note (TGN) is part of a series of documents on integrating gender equality into the sector operations of Caribbean Development Bank (CDB). The Notes identify key issues which lead to, and reinforce gender inequality, and propose possible solutions for addressing them.

The TGNs fall within CDB's strategic objectives of supporting inclusive and sustainable growth and development and good governance, both internally, and among its Borrowing Member Countries (BMCs).

This specific TGN focuses on Education and Training. The importance of this sector to the human resource and overall development of the Caribbean must be underscored. This document identifies the key gender issues which have a negative impact on the development of the sector and educational outcomes. The highlighted issues and suggested solutions clearly point to the need for gender-based research and gender-sensitive perspectives in the crafting and evaluation of educational programmes, curricula, teacher training and school and classroom management.

The TGN on Education builds on the CDB-funded Caribbean Gender Differentials Framework and the Bank's recently developed Gender Implementation Guidelines (GIGs) for the Design and Implementation of Education Sector Development Plans.

The expectation is that the TGN will assist the relevant field officers, technical specialists and decision-makers in effectively infusing gender equality into the Region's education sector going forward.

KEY GENDER EQUALITY ISSUES IN THE EDUCATION AND TRAINING SECTOR

1

A lack of sex-disaggregated data limits the capacity of schools/ educational institutions to adequately address gender equality in their operations

Public schools generally do not demonstrate a clear understanding of gender bias or gender stereotyping. This is due in part to a lack of sex-disaggregated data. Appropriate quantitative and qualitative data on enrollment, attendance, completion rates and performance by sex and age, student participation or security and safety, for example, can indicate whether the school environment in the form of curricula, textbooks, teaching approaches, facilities and school policies adequately and appropriately addresses the differentiated needs of girls and boys.

2

Unconscious gender biases influence classroom management and pedagogical approaches

Without a gender-conscious approach within the education system, cultural perceptions and internalised values can result in unconscious biases and the reaffirming of gender stereotypes. These play out in the classroom in the performance and attitudes of the students as well as in teaching approaches and teacher-student interaction.

3

Gender issues play a pivotal role in why boys and girls drop out of school.

Understanding how gender influences social and cultural behaviours is helpful in addressing the issues of early school-leavers or “drop-outs”. Regional, national and indigenous value systems play a significant role in determining girls’ participation in formal education, particularly in cases where early marriage and teen pregnancy predominate. Similarly, the feminisation of the education system through outdated/gender-biased curricula and pedagogical practices deter boys’ continued participation in formal education, particularly in instances where more “lucrative” opportunities may assert themselves in the form of gang membership or informal sector activities.

4

Violence in school has significant impact on the academic performance of students

Physical, emotional and sexual violence or violation in schools can play a significant role in the capacity of the student-victim(s) to participate fully in the academic programme and may temporarily or permanently shut down the student-victim’s capacity to engage in the learning process.

5

The perpetuation of gender stereotypes influences the subjects/ careers which boys and girls choose

Socialisation in gender-specific roles in the workplace starts early in life. The school environment may perpetuate through textbooks, methodological approaches and discussions. These role models often determine the subjects female and male students choose in Technical Vocational Education and Training or at universities and therefore the pay they get on entering the workforce. Although girls in the Region stay longer in the school system, they still receive less pay due to occupational segregation on the labour market and unequal pay for equal work.

6

Girls and boys are not being prepared for gender-related challenges in the workplace

Research has identified a few key gaps in the current Health and Family Life Education (HFLE) programme at schools. These include a lack of preparation for the workplace, including an understanding of acceptable work ethics, how to address gender-related challenges such as sexual harassment and how to negotiate contracts.

SOLUTIONS FOR INTEGRATING GENDER EQUALITY INTO THE EDUCATION SECTOR

A lack of sex-disaggregated data limits the capacity of schools to adequately address gender equality in its operations

Education systems need to develop a set of gender-related education indicators which can be strategically used to mainstream gender into educational policies and to measure progress. Educators also need to be trained to avoid gender bias in the curricula and encouraged to pursue curriculum reform, including the revision of textbooks to eliminate existing biases.

Unconscious gender biases influence classroom management and pedagogical approaches

While individual schools may not be able to influence the curriculum content, through gender-aware pedagogical approaches and teaching methodologies these unconscious biases can be challenged and addressed. This requires (in-service) training for teachers and school leaders in how to create gender-responsive classrooms.

Gender issues play a pivotal role in why boys and girls drop out of school

Specific programmes to address the issue of school “drop outs” include enhanced re-entry systems for pregnant girls; parenting support classes; more school-to-work transition programmes (including child care support); scholarships for at-risk students and the development of technology-based education methods. There is also need to accelerate the implementation of the Caribbean Vocational Qualifications (CVQ) programme, review the Health and Family Life Education (HFLE) curriculum, and identify career planning approaches between secondary education and TVET schools. It is also important to strengthen student support services generally (psychosocial services) as well early identification warning systems for identifying students at risk of education and societal failure.

Violence in school has significant impact on the academic performance of students

Any form of violence in schools should be addressed with firm policies and disciplinary action. This includes: ensuring that the conflict resolution components of HFLE: peer counselling programmes, gang resistance, stop gender-based violence and anti-bullying campaigns are being implemented; and, safety audits of school buildings and yards are conducted. Other activities might include speakers’ programmes by former gang members or former radicalised persons to deter students from joining these groups, and ensuring that guidance counsellors are trained to identify and effectively counsel at-risk students.

The perpetuation of gender stereotypes influences the subjects/careers which boys and girls choose

BMCs of CDB need to adopt strategic approaches to ensuring that girls and boys are made aware of study and career options like Science, Technology, Engineering and Medicine (STEM) subjects and non-traditional trades which offer greater opportunity for higher incomes.

Girls and boys are not being prepared for gender-related challenges in the workplace

The HFLE curriculum at secondary school level should be revised to include training on how to: identify and address sexual harassment at school and in the workplace; negotiate contracts that reflect the true worth of the position, particularly for girls; and, employability skills, e.g. value and ethics modules, networking, preparing job applications.

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