Gendered Voices

Reflections on Gender and Education in South Africa and Sudan

H.B. Holmarsdottir, V. Nomlomo, A.I. Farag and Z. Desai (Eds.)

Internationally, there is growing awareness that the target of Education for All by 2015 will not be met unless more strident efforts are made to improve access for marginalized, hard-to-reach children (most often girls). For almost four decades gender equality in education has been one of the key global concerns and as a result various organizations at national and international levels along with governments have initiated programs focusing on achieving gender equality, women’s empowerment and improving girls’ access to education. By focusing on access alone (i.e. gender parity) we may not understand how education can be used to achieve empowerment and influence cultural practices that are gender insensitive. In this volume we attempt to call into question the content of gender equality as simple parity and in doing so we reflect upon the following questions:

• Do the global (macro) discourses on gender equality in education lead to a focus on numbers only or to more profound sustainable changes at the national (meso) level and the school (micro) level?
• To what extent have national policies been adjusted to reflect the global discourses on gender equality?
• Are schools/classrooms (micro) expected to adjust to these global discourses and if so in what ways has this happened?
• What are the challenges of providing access to good quality education for girls in both countries?
• To what extent is gender equality/parity imposed upon schools and communities and does it take into account the cultural practices in traditional communities?

Key words: Gender equality, education, Global vs. local concerns

3 selling points:

• The volume highlights that although research has shown how global educational policies homogenize national educational policies and are therefore playing what can be termed a neo-colonial role in identifying pivotal themes and topics in education across the world such as gender equality, literacy and quality education in local contexts, they are often steeped in a Western logic which is not always culturally relevant or conducive. Making global recommendations for education across cultures and places is thus not always unproblematic.
• The volume highlights that a push for girls’ schooling must navigate wisely in sensitive terrain where complex contextual aspects must be understood and taken into account. Girls’ attendance and retention in school are important first steps in the struggle for epistemic access, but must be followed by serious deliberations about what kind of school and what kind of knowledge in the schools is appropriate, and about equality and equity.
• The volume attempts to understand how the global gender goals in education affect both local policies and local practice and in doing so it attempts to question the simple focus on access only.
Gendered Voices
Comparative and International Education: A Diversity of Voices

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Gendered Voices:

Reflections on Gender and Education in South Africa and Sudan

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The editors would like to express their great appreciation to many people who have played a part in bringing this volume to completion. The majority of the chapters in this collection originated as paper presentations in a panel session on Gender Equality and Education in Post-Conflict Countries at the XIV World Congress of Comparative Education Societies held in Istanbul, Turkey on June 14-18, 2010. The Congress was hosted by the World Council of Comparative Education Societies and by the local organizers TÜKED (Turkish Comparative Education Society) and Boğaziçi University. We would like to thank all parties involved in the XIV World Congress, and in particular the Congress Convenor Professor Fatma Gök and the other members of the Local Organizing Committee who organized the extended session. We are also grateful to everyone who attended the session and provided critical feedback and not the least challenging questions, all of which helped to improve the work found in this volume.

We would also like to thank all of the contributors to this volume for their hard work and enthusiasm. Each of the authors conscientiously worked with us to refine and articulate their respective contributions. The result is a volume that sheds light on both the personal and professional aspects in terms of gender equality not only in education, but also in terms of North-South-South research collaboration. This collaboration would not have been possible without generous funding from the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (NORAD) through their NUFU program, which is administered by the Norwegian Centre for International Cooperation in Education (SIU). We are grateful to have been given the opportunity through this funding to work with a wonderful group of scholars across borders, both physical and epistemological.

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1. REVISITING THE DISCOURSES ON GENDER EQUALITY, EQUITY AND EDUCATION

For roughly the past four decades gender equality has been and still is one of the key global concerns in achieving empowerment for women and girls. A number of initiatives have focused on achieving gender equality and women’s empowerment, many of which have been initiated by various organizations at national and international levels (Arnot & Fennell, 2008; Colclough, 2008; Hains, 2009; Joseph, 2009; Mehran, 2009; Unterhalter, 2008). Thus, improving girl’s access to education, particularly among the most marginalised groups, has been one of the major goals of many national and international organizations. Further, the adoption of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in 2000 was an important step towards, among other things, poverty alleviation, improved access to education and gender equality in education founded on the notion of Education For All (EFA) (Arnot & Fennell, 2008).

This book seeks to address some of the issues mentioned above with regard to gender equality, equity and poverty in education in post-conflict countries. The chapters in this book are a product of a five year collaborative North-South-South project between Norway, South Africa and Sudan. Accordingly, the book is an attempt to understand the key issues related to gender and education as part of the larger research project entitled Gender Equality, Education and Poverty (GEEP), funded by the Norwegian Programme for Development, Research and Education (NUFU). The project encompasses critical questions surrounding gender equality, equity, and education within a context of poverty in post-conflict South Africa and Sudan. The understanding is that the social production of gender is inseparable from that of race, sexuality, class, nationality, ability and other categories of difference. The project places feminist concerns within a transnational context, while respecting the need for geographic and historical specificity. While it is important to understand that these two countries represent each end of the spectrum in terms of development on the African continent, the GEEP project also believes that gender equality in education is a challenging issue in both countries and as such our focus is on both the similarities and differences in these two contexts. The ways in which gender issues are understood globally and, in particular, in these two contexts depend on how gender, equality and education are defined and how the consequences of this are assessed (Unterhalter,
In addition, a key issue in the project is to develop a wider understanding of the issues and tensions that inevitably arise in conducting large scale, collaborative and comparative research. As such, some of the chapters (2, 3, 7 and 11) will reflect upon the ongoing debate about the significance in the postcolonial era of issues about power and inequality that lie at the heart of the research process (Holmarsdottir, 2011; Lather, 1991; Mohanty, 2004).

Furthermore, both the project and this book have been conceived against the notion of Education For All (EFA), which strives to give all children access to education whilst alleviating discriminatory and oppressive social and cultural practices against women and children, particularly girls (Arnot & Fenell, 2008; Colclough, 2008). Overall, the book aims to explore the state of affairs in relation to numerical gender equity (often seen as gender equality) in South Africa and Sudan (particularly in the south and among marginalized groups in the north). It also aims to transcend the numbers game with regard to gender equality by exploring how education can be used to achieve empowerment and influence cultural practices that are gender insensitive (the chapters in section II and III in particular focus on this). Broadly, the GEEP project seeks to address the following questions:

- Do the global (macro) discourses on gender equality in education lead to a focus on numbers only or to more profound sustainable changes at the national (meso) level and the school (micro) level?
- To what extent have national policies been adjusted to reflect the global discourses on gender equality?
- Are schools/classrooms (micro) expected to adjust to these global discourses and if so in what ways has this happened?
- What are the challenges of providing access to good quality education for girls in both countries?
- Is there a dichotomy between the schools/classrooms on the one hand and the community on the other in terms of gender equality/equity?
- To what extent is gender equality/equity imposed upon schools and communities and does it take into account the cultural practices in traditional communities?

This book comprises eleven chapters which are categorized into four sections. The first section (Chapters 2–4), deals with theoretical and methodological underpinnings of global gender discourses in order to gain a better insight into the relationship between gender discourses and local gender practices. It also discusses issues of governance and their impact on gender equality, equity and empowerment in education as well as reflecting on personal involvement in the campaign to achieve gender equality. In Chapter 2 Holmarsdottir reflects on the issues of “global governance” and the EFA movement. In her chapter she argues that global governance can affect the way in which educational systems are influenced and involves how we view various issues within education. A key issue in the EFA movement, accepted as part of
the global consensus of ‘what works’, is the emphasis on gender within education. Thus, Holmarsdottir attempts to understand issues related to gender and education by providing a critical analysis of how the global consensus to advance gender equality and equity in education are understood. Through the use of social cartography (Paulston, 1996) Holmarsdottir maps the global discourses and, in particular, the ways in which gender equality and equity are envisioned through an analysis of several global documents. The chapter concludes by arguing that the global documents display a misconception in which the focus clearly seems to be in terms of normative ‘gains’ involving a setting of standards and in developing an agenda about equality. While the redistributive ‘gains’ in terms of equity needed to transform choices, and the conditions under which choices are made, have not necessarily been converted into practice, there remains an acceptance of the normative ideas in terms of gender, but perhaps too little in terms of action (Subrahmanian, 2005).

This first section of the book, furthermore, includes a chapter in which the author contemplates her own involvement in feminist research and her participation in the struggle for girls’ education. In Chapter 3 Amna Bedri, a member of the Badri family, reflects on her own experiences with girls’ education in Sudan. The Badri family is well-known for their involvement in championing the cause of girls’ education in Sudan. Thus, in her chapter, Amna Bedri reflects not only on her role, but also on her own memories of the struggles experienced by the Badri family in establishing the first school for girls and ultimately their success with the establishment of a University for women in the country. Through the inclusion of this more personal chapter the editors believe that the reader will get a more nuanced picture of the struggles and the sacrifices made in attempting to bring about equal opportunities in education in the country and more specifically in getting the education of women and girls on the agenda. This chapter represents a more personal reflection in achieving the global gender goals, something which is often overlooked in the general academic genre.

The section closes with a final reflective discussion on the use of qualitative interviews with women and girls written by Marit Petersen. This chapter (Chapter 4) gives some perspectives on how researchers could make use of interviews to give voice to women and girls in different research contexts. By reflecting on previous research conducted by Petersen in South Africa she reanalyzes her data in light of a new epistemological standpoint by further reflecting on the interview as a means of data collection. Petersen challenges both herself and other researchers to go beyond the stories told by women and girls and instead to reflect further on how to uncover the hidden meanings in the stories told. Furthermore, she takes up the challenge by Anderson and Jack (1991) and their three ways of listening in her attempt to consider new ways of listening to the stories told in conducting research involving women and girls.
The second section includes both case study chapters and chapters that explore the relevant literature addressing issues of gender inequality in education (Chapters 5–7). The majority of these chapters give some perspectives on the significance of girls’ access to education whilst highlighting some challenges confronting girls in education, more particularly in Sudan. This part is based on both the presentation of findings from fieldwork conducted in Sudan and on literature drawn from international and local contexts in order to understand social and cultural practices which influence gender inequality in the country. In Chapter 5 Shadia Daoud critically reviews issues of gender equality in education in Sudan. In her chapter Daoud explores the relationship between gender equality, education and poverty, particularly among poor communities in this country. As a point of departure, the chapter gives an overview of global discourses on gender equality in order to arrive at the current issues and practices surrounding gender equality and education in the Sudanese context. Following a feminist theoretical approach, it concludes that traditional beliefs and practices as well as poverty are the key factors which have an effect on gender inequalities among Sudanese communities. While these issues have been well documented through research in several other contexts, it is important to point out that despite these studies, along with the global consensus to advance gender equality and equity in education, traditional beliefs and practices prove difficult to change. This does not indicate, however, that we should concede defeat, but instead efforts need to be made in order to find ways in which to transform choices and conditions under which choices are made for women and girls in terms of gender equity.

In her chapter (Chapter 6) Alawia Farag focuses her attention on how nomadic or semi-nomadic girls perceive gender equality and empowerment through education. This chapter explores nomadic girls’ motivations, expectations, experiences and feelings towards basic education opportunities in order to gain an insight into how these factors influence their own understanding of gender, equality, education and empowerment. Farag’s chapter is based on a qualitative study she conducted among semi-nomadic people in the Khartoum State of Sudan. The findings of the study show that socio-economic and cultural factors have an influence not only on girls’ access to education, but also on their perceptions of the value of education and empowerment. Farag concludes that these factors serve to perpetuate gender inequality among semi-nomadic communities in particular, where issues of marriage and the importance of animals in these communities take precedence over the importance of the education of girls.

The final chapter (Chapter 7) in this section is focused on research conducted in Southern Sudan. The main concern of this chapter is education in South Sudan, particularly the education of girls and women in this new country; a country that has suffered from a civil war that has lasted for 50
years. The chapter focuses on the contemporary situation in certain areas of Equatoria (Juba Town and the Ma'di area). In this chapter Breidlid and Breidlid link their discussion, in light of their research findings, with several theories, among them the work by Anthony Giddens (1991) in particular and his arguments on tradition versus modernity in which he identifies tradition with place and modernity with space. Thus the chapter focuses on two important sites of female pupils’ lives, the home territory and the school in order to explore how and to what extent home and school address girls’ issues differently. The chapter concludes with the notion that girls’ attendance and retention in school are important first steps in the struggle for cognitive justice, but girls’ schooling does not necessarily mean that the skewed division of labour or the western perceptions of “female subordination” in South Sudan will disappear. It is important that researchers do not accept at face value the modernist thrust of gender equality without considering indigenous content, perspectives and ways of knowing.

The third section of this book (Chapters 8–10) is research-based as it focuses on case studies conducted in schools in disadvantaged South African communities. The chapters in this section give some perspectives around education and gender identity constructions, girls’ capabilities and empowerment. The chapters emphasize the significance of education as a tool for the empowerment of women and girls. Chapter 8 written by Vuyokazi Nomlomo starts off this section by reflecting on a qualitative study conducted in an urban school in South Africa. The aim of this chapter is to explore some factors which shape adolescent girls’ identity construction in order to determine the extent to which these factors promote or impede gender equality at the school level. The chapter is based on a small qualitative case study which was conducted with adolescent girls in a disadvantaged school environment in Cape Town, South Africa. As a point of departure, the chapter gives a contextual overview of girls’ education in South Africa with regard to efforts and initiatives taken to promote gender equality in schools. It then discusses gender identity construction within a social construct and liberal feminist framework in order to get an insight into how gender identity is socially constructed and how oppressive practices and gender stereotypes could be challenged, particularly in educational settings. The chapter concludes that gender identity construction is influenced by stereotypes which are linked to socio-cultural beliefs and practices which penetrate through the school system and are reproduced in various forms which exacerbate gender inequality. It calls for collaboration among different stakeholders including teachers, parents and the youth to be part of the transformation process with regard to gender inequality in society and in schools.

Heidi Augestad’s chapter (Chapter 9) contributes to our understanding of how gender norms may be perceived and experienced within the micro context of a school in an African township outside of Cape Town. She starts off by
broadly examining educational approaches to gender and how these intersect with the perceptions and experiences of young girls and boys in terms of gender norms and practices in their homes and broader communities. Augestad’s research, which is a qualitative study, has been framed by the following questions: What kind of gender structure do the respondents experience in their school and in their homes and communities? To what extent are these experiences recognised and included in the school’s curriculum and social policy? To what extent does the school manage to provide students with capabilities so that they can practise gender equality in their home relationships? She draws on two main theoretical frameworks. The first is social construction theory which provides a set of conceptual tools in order to understand how gender norms, roles and practices may be produced and reproduced in social contexts and the second is the capability approach which highlights individual freedom and agency in working towards gender equality and social justice. In conclusion, the chapter illustrates how gender perceptions and practices may be expressed and experienced differently from a school perspective and from a family or community perspective. The author recommends that schools need to approach gender with a broader focus on the social and cultural aspects as well if they want pupils to develop capabilities to challenge existing hegemonies.

The last chapter in the section (Chapter 10) written by Ingrid Birgitte Møller Ekne questions whether education is a tool for empowerment in the lives of primary school girls in South African township schools. Ekne combines theories of empowerment with Bronfenbrenner’s ecological systems theory and Nuttun’s theory of future time perspective in which the focus is on school, home and the future. In general, Ekne finds it difficult to come to an overall conclusion in which education is seen as automatically leading to the kind of empowerment suggested in the conceptual framework of her study. This is based on the fact that the girls in her study are exposed to a number of risk factors in their environments (both inside and outside of the home) and thus questions of true empowerment are difficult to answer. However, she does point to the good relationship the girls have with their teachers, which provides a certain amount of support and thus can contribute to a kind of personal empowerment through education and ultimately provide them with a sense of hope for the future.

The last section reflects on the GEEP project itself and the book in general. Chapter 11 is written by Ann Torday Gulden, in which she highlights the importance of language in academic writing and is based on Ann’s work with the GEEP research group as an external participant. In her chapter Gulden reflects on her work with the group through a series of workshops in which she has served as a guest lecturer and where she has also been involved in providing critical feedback to the project participants. The chapter focuses on challenges in working across cultures and academic traditions in the overall
North-South-South collaborative project. In this chapter Gulden reflects upon her experience and involvement with the GEEP researchers as they were building their research competencies and conference presentation capacities during two academic writing workshops, held in Oslo in October 2009 and May 2010. In these workshops Gulden’s role as a facilitator was to encourage and critically comment on presentations and draft papers for an upcoming conference panel. A key point of focus in the workshops was the fact that the group consisted of researchers from different academic institutions with different experiences and skills and thus issues of insertion of researcher presence, author positioning and the articulation of the various idiosyncratic researchers’ voices were given considerable focus.

Ultimately, the overall idea of this publication is to include chapters written by established researchers combined with chapters by up-and-coming researchers within the field in the three countries, Norway, South Africa and Sudan. This combination is seen as both a means of informing readers outside of these contexts of the current practice and the foreseeable future of research in the field of Gender and Education.

NOTES

1 It should be noted that the GEEP project began in 2008, when Sudan was one country. Thus, in many of the case studies presented in this book the data collection took place initially in the Sudan. However, given that the project is ongoing (it will end in 2013) it must be understood that the work is now focusing on three countries: South Africa, Sudan, and the Republic of South Sudan.

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SECTION I

REFLECTIONS ON DISCOURSES,
STRUGGLES AND METHODOLOGY IN
GENDER AND EDUCATION
INTRODUCTION

A global campaign on education began with the first World Congress on Education held in Jomtien, Thailand in 1990. As a result of the World Congress, we have witnessed an ushering in of a global agenda on education. The global campaign culminated in the start of the Education for All (EFA) movement when delegates from 155 countries, as well as representatives from roughly 150 governmental and non-governmental organizations, committed themselves to achieving EFA and, in turn, reaffirmed the notion of education as a fundamental human right. This resulted in a new era of educational research focusing on issues such as the “world institutionalization of education” (Meyer & Ramirez, 2000), “global governance” (Mundy, 2006) or the “harmonization of education” (Tröhler, 2010).

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

The result has not only been the way in which educational systems are affected, but also involves how we view various issues within education (Meyer & Ramirez, 2000). Linked to the idea of global governance in education, Mundy (2006) points out that the EFA agenda “has steadily built momentum as a focus for discussion and action within the international community” (p. 24). As a result, EFA and other global agendas have “become part of a broadly based consensus about ‘what works’ among bilateral and multilateral development agencies” (Mundy, 2006, p. 24).

These developments have, however, brought about criticism, where some critics portray educational policy-makers as marionettes whose strings are pulled by both the global economy and promoted by the money provided by the different governmental and non-governmental organizations and international educational bureaucracies like UNESCO or UNICEF (Chabott, 2003). Other critics have argued that in any case the global dissemination of ideas, goals, and means is limited only to formal structures – in other words to policy issues – and thus generally does not affect the inner activities of
education, such as those which take place inside the classroom (Meyer & Rowan, 1977, 1978).

Critics aside, one of the key issues found within the EFA movement, which has been accepted as part of the global consensus of 'what works' is the emphasis on gender within education. This emphasis has, however, mainly focused on the quantitative aspects of gender, namely gender parity. Accordingly, we currently have significant knowledge about the causes and consequences of the low participation rates for girls and young women in education, with much of the research data consisting of evidence collected through large scale quantitative studies focusing on the number of girls in school (Colclough, Rose, & Tembon, 1998; Wiseman, 2008). Consequently, a considerable amount of research has focused on access to education and to some degree on retention (Baker & Wiseman, 2009; Bendera, 1999; Brock & Cammish, 1997; Colclough et al. 1998; Fleisch & Shindler, 2009; King & Hill, 1993; Motala, Dieltiens, & Sayed, 2009; Swainson, Bendera, Gordon, & Kadzamira, 1998; Wiseman, 2008). There have, however, been fewer studies that have taken a more in-depth qualitative approach in examining the local realities of the school environment and the community.

Accordingly, this chapter is an attempt to understand the key issues related to gender and education as part of the Gender Equality, Education and Poverty (GEEP) project. As noted in the introduction to this book, the project encompasses critical questions surrounding gender equality, equity, and education within a context of poverty in post-conflict South Africa and Sudan. On the whole, the project attempts to reflect on the global discourses surrounding gender within education in which all the GEEP researchers acknowledge that educational research has essentially been about the school system and as a result the focus has primarily been on counting the number of girls and boys enrolled in different phases of education. However, as Unterhalter (2005a) argues this is “a descriptive and primarily biological meaning of gender and a very simple understanding of equality as equal numbers” (p. 77). This criticism suggests that a simplistic focus on numbers has not encouraged us to “understand education much more broadly than schooling” (Unterhalter, 2005a, p. 77). Furthermore, she points out that our challenge then remains to “look at processes of developing political and cultural understandings and the capacity for action between different socially situated gendered groups in a range of different settings, including, but not only comprising schooling” (the equity issues) (Unterhalter, 2005a, p. 77).

In taking up this challenge, I will attempt to examine what we know and do not know within the theory domain on gender and education, focusing specifically around the concepts of equality and equity and reflecting on the global discourses through an analysis of several global documents. In doing so my concern is to provide a critical analysis of how the global consensus to advance gender equality and equity in education is understood at a policy level (how this works in practice is focused on in several of the remaining chapters in this volume). This will be achieved through the use of social cartography (Paulston, 1996), a mapping exercise in which I map the discourses surrounding the key issues mentioned above. Ultimately, the goal is for this
analysis to serve as an exchange of ideas to build upon and thus increase global awareness around the issue of gender within education.

MAPPING: WHAT IS IT AND HOW IS IT USED?

Here I address the issue of depiction and representation, and examine the possibilities that social cartography (Paulston, 1996) or mapmaking offers educational researchers in general and the GEEP research project in particular. This chapter specifically focuses on how the global discourses surrounding gender within education can be visualized through Paulston’s (1996) mapping method. Currently, many educational researchers refer to cartography, often referring to “mapping” a field or range of issues, but as Ruitenberg (2007) argues “few actually create visual maps” (p. 8). For my use here maps are seen as:

…visual representations of locations, positions, distances, relations, and so forth, and although perhaps the most obvious examples of maps are geographical (world maps, road maps, etc.), maps are also used to represent other, less tangible, objects and phenomena (e.g., concept maps, process flow charts) (Ruitenberg, 2007, p. 8).

For Paulston (1996) social cartography involves the mapping of concepts, ideas, and phenomena. According to Paulston and Liebman (1996), “the writing and reading of maps…[addresses] questions of location in the social milieu” (p. 7). Thus social cartography illustrates the use of metaphor as a way of navigating the discourses between polarities, which for my purpose are equality and equity. Moreover, maps are not necessarily neutral documents. Since the process of mapping encourages personal interpretation of specific criteria in representing spatial relationships among differing ideas, social cartography relies heavily upon the use of visual metaphor as an explanatory device to bring about further discussion. The main thrust of Paulston’s (1996) argument is that through mapmaking researchers communicate a representation of fields whose truth we acknowledge from the start to be both personal and qualified and, as such, we engage in dialogue that is reflexive and non-absolutist when we embrace the process of social cartography.

By conducting my mapping exercise, it is not my intention to suggest that my views are necessarily shared in the broader social context, but it is simply to visualize the discourses in the field in order to initiate a dialogue between the research group of which I am part of and between this group and the larger research community involved in gender-based research. Moreover, the leap from physical mapping to the social cartography surrounding gender equality and equity within education can serve as a platform for further theoretical developments. Furthermore, such mapping exercises are a useful device for summarizing and communicating information and it is argued that some individuals may encode information more effectively as images rather than words (Clark & Paivio, 1991; Paivio, 1986).

In addition to seeing maps as a way of communicating information, we may also see them as a methodological tool. Borrowing from social network theory, Rust (1996) explains how maps consist of nodes (represented by points in the diagram) and ties (represented by lines in the diagram). A node
represents the actors and lines represent the ties between actors. Rust (1996) argues that:

…in mapping the intellectual landscape…a node is not necessarily a person, but can be either a text or a particular theoretical orientation. Lines represent the kind of interactions or relationships that exist between different texts or theoretical orientations (p. 45).

The nodes in my mapping represent the discourses, located in policy documents, surrounding gender within education at the global level with the lines representing the ties between these discourses. In attempting to conceptualize what maps are, Huff (1996) suggests that:

…maps can be placed on a continuum… and that the relationships ultimately chosen for mapping depend upon the purpose of the map…It is possible, however, to group the purposes of mapping…into at least five ‘families’ (pp. 163–164).

The five ‘families’ suggested by Huff are: maps that assess attention, association and importance of concepts; maps that show dimensions of categories and cognitive taxonomies; maps that show influence, causality and system dynamics; maps that show structure of argument and conclusion; and maps that specify schemas, frames and perceptual codes. Given that there are a range of techniques available within each of these families it is also believed that “in practice map makers often use more than one approach to mapping” (Huff, 1996, p. 165). Ultimately, my maps fall into Huff’s first category as I attempt to assess the attention, association and importance of the concepts equality and equity in terms of gender.

In a publication on the use of maps in the Humanities and Social Sciences, Monmonier (1993) states the following:

Writing with maps works best if the scholar learns to think spatially and to use maps at all stages of research, not just while writing. Mapping, after all, is not solely a medium for communication, but is also a tool of analysis and discovery…maps work best for organizing information if we condition ourselves to look for information worth mapping (pp. 12–13).

Just as Monmonier (1993) suggests, my mapping exercise here is not simply for communication, it is also used as a tool for the analysis of the various international agreements, the discourses. Thus, as Paulston and Liebman (1996) argue, maps allow us to see the intertextuality of discourses. The starting point is that the mapper’s own perceptions of the world, as combined with the discourses of the multiple and diverse intellectual community result in not “a truth, but a cognitive art” (Paulston & Liebman, 1996, p. 14). The end result is a map that:

…identifies intellectual communities and relationships, illustrates domains, suggests a field of interactive ideas and opens space to all propositions and ways of seeing in the social milieu. What appears as open space within the global representation is space that can be claimed by intellectual communities whose discourse is not yet represented on the map (Paulston & Liebman, 1996, pp. 15–16).
Thus the map which I will present later in this chapter allows for new ideas and new discourses to be mapped in as they are discovered, serving as a platform for further theoretical developments. Before moving to my map I will first discuss how I understand gender equality and equity.

**My understanding of gender equality and equity**

A key point in social cartography is the acknowledgement of the power of maps and the relation between power and knowledge. Consequently, Paulston (1996) views maps not as neutral documents, but emphasizes the need to point out the position of the mapper, often by placing themselves within their own mapping. In this section I attempt to position myself by identifying the way in which I understand and define the concepts of gender equality and equity and in doing so I will be placing my own understanding in reaction to the global mapping which I present in the next section. In presenting my own interpretation I am:

Acknowledging the power of maps and the relation between power and knowledge, social cartography mapping seeks to expose the non-innocence of all maps by placing the mapper on her/his own mapping, making it apparent in this manner that maps, especially those whose truth claims are framed as universal, reveal themselves as partial, and context-dependent accounts that are relative to the conceptual schemes in which they are constructed, as are social cartography mappings (O’Dowd, 2009, p. 81).

In attempting to understand the two concepts, I have made an effort to review a number of books, articles and reports in which gender equality and equity are discussed. In doing this it became apparent to me that not only are the global documents unclear about the definition or use of these terms, but even researchers display a certain amount of confusion in how the terms are used and defined. Despite this, I have managed to uncover some texts which present a more consistent understanding of the terms. For example, in their publication, Gender Equity in South African Education 1994-2004, Chisholm and September (2005) point out that the Gender Equity Task Team (GETT) Report from 1997 “recognised that equity did not mean affirmative action that favoured women, and it meant more than the provision of equal access to educational facilities” (p. 3) and as such, the understanding in the report was to move beyond the numbers and in turn beyond simple gender parity. In the publication by Chisholm and September, Subrahmanian (2005) presents an understanding of gender equality and equity which I believe reflects my own understanding of the terms.

Subrahmanian (2005) argues that equity ‘gains’ are “the meaningful redistribution of resources and opportunities and the transformation of conditions under which women make choices” (p. 29). This way of thinking about equity is also in agreement with Sen’s (1999) capability theory, which is the underlying theoretical foundation of the GEEP project. Thus, Subrahmanian (2005) equates equity with justice and furthermore places gender equality within a rights framework arguing that:
Equality ‘gains’...refer to the acceptance in development and political discourse of the importance of equality; [while] equity ‘gains’ [means] actions to translate the standard of equality into meaningful redistribution of resources and opportunities and the transformation of the conditions in which women are being encouraged to make choices (p. 29).

A misconception in the use of these terms arises from the conflict between the concept of ‘gains’ which are on the one hand “normative (in terms of setting standards and to some extent shaping agendas)” with those ‘gains’ that are “redistributive (in terms of transforming choices and the conditions under which choices are made)” (Subrahmanian, 2005, p. 29). Having discussed my position as the mapper, I will now move my focus to the global discourses surrounding gender equality and equity.

MAPPING THE GLOBAL DISCOURSES ON GENDER EQUALITY AND EQUITY

Recovering the lives of women from the neglect of historians was the goal of women’s history from its inception. Its methodology and interests have evolved over time as it has become established as an academic discipline. From its early origins in cataloguing great women in history, in the 1970s it turned to recording ordinary women’s expectations, aspirations and status. Then, with the rise of the feminist movement, the emphasis shifted in the 1980s towards exposing the oppression of women and examining how they responded to discrimination and subordination. In more recent times, women’s history has moved to charting female agency, recognising women’s strategies, accommodations and negotiations within a male dominated world. Although it developed out of the feminist agenda, gender history has somewhat different objectives. Recognising that femininity and masculinity are to some extent social constructs, it investigates how institutions are gendered and how institutions gender individuals. In a short space of time gender has become an indispensable category for historical analysis alongside class and race (Bailey, 2005, para. 1).

In the quote above Bailey demonstrates that there is no single agenda or mode of discourse linked to the feminist agenda. Instead the women’s movement opened up new questions and strategies for change by expanding and building gender differentiated meanings and positions on a number of issues. Thus as Geertz (1973) points out: women and gender historians deal with the same “grand realities... Power, Change, Faith, Oppression, Work, Passion, Authority, Beauty, Violence, Love, [and] Prestige” (p. 21). The key is to explore how such realities influence and affect women and men in various ways. By conducting this mapping exercise, I hope to come closer to achieving this goal.

As a starting point in mapping the discourses, I begin with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) (United Nations, 1948) in which neither equity nor equality are mentioned, instead the term equal is found throughout the document, relating to equal rights. The key issue is one of equal access to rights for both men and women.
Although human rights are not necessarily new, particularly within the field of education and development, recent focus suggests a systematic application and increased relevance of human rights standards. Some of the recent literature on human rights suggests that the goal is to “develop poor people’s capacities to demand justice” (Tomas, 2005, p. 174). Thus, a rights-based approach with a focus on equality allows us to see people as active agents. Moreover, Tomas (2005) argues that “a rights-based approach facilitates the analysis of how justice systems deal with poverty-related inequalities, and thus the extent to which they may be ‘biased’ against the poor” (p. 174). A rights-based approach basically means to address simultaneously two separate, yet interacting, parties – the rights holders and the duty bearers.

In the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) (United Nations, 1979) the issue of equity has only one mention, in which it is linked to justice, and where the issue of equity is placed within an economic agenda. Thus, the Convention maintains “…that the establishment of the new international economic order based on equity and justice will contribute significantly towards the promotion of equality between men and women” (United Nations, 1979, preamble). Not only is the use of equity vague in the CEDAW it has also been argued that justice itself is a “contested concept that evokes varied claims to fairness, equality, impartiality and appropriate rewards or punishments” (Teehankee, 2007, Aspects of a Liberal Theory of Justice, para. 1). Furthermore Teehankee (2007) argues that there are three liberal conceptions of justice, namely: libertarianism, liberal egalitarianism, and liberal developmentalism. Given constraints of space in this chapter, I will focus on the latter as it links with the underlying theoretical foundation of the GEEP project.

It is argued that “Liberal developmentalism is a fairly new dimension to the liberal concept of justice that emerged from the writings of Amartya Sen” (Teehankee, 2007, Aspects of a Liberal Theory of Justice, para. 4). Founded on the Aristotelian concept of the ‘good life’, Sen (1984, 1992) emphasizes that the goal of both justice and poverty reduction should be to expand the functional capability people have to enjoy. For Sen functionings are “valuable beings and doings” (1999, p. 75), such as being nourished, being confident, or taking part in group decisions. It is also acknowledged that certain capabilities, particularly education, enlarge each other. The word, functionings, is of Aristotelian origin and, like Aristotle, this approach claims that “functionings are constitutive of a person’s being” (Sen, 1999, p. 73).

While equity has only one mention in the CEDAW, the term equality stands as a central theme in the document. Equality here refers to the issue of rights, similar to that found in the UDHR. The CEDAW argues that the theme of equality found in the 14 articles of the document covers three dimensions: civil rights and legal status of women, human reproduction and the impact of cultural factors on gender relations (United Nations, 1979). The main thrust of the document thus appears to be on rights, non-discrimination and participation. Gerhard (2001), however, points out that there appears to be some confusion in the use of the term equality in Western discourse, which comes from its origins.
In Western discourse equality is derived from Aristotle’s concept of equality of justice, which has caused conceptual confusion in modern times. According to this rule, only “things that are alike should be treated alike, while things that are unalike should be treated unalike in proportion to their unalikeness.”… In terms of legal equality between men and women…the principle of equality assumes that men and women are different and that they will not become identical as a result of equal treatment, but will be able to preserve their difference. The 1949 Basic Law…of the Federal Republic of Germany explicitly guaranteed the legal equality of man and woman, including private law for the first time, and thus invalidating the Aristotelian rule (Gerhard, 2001, pp. 7–8).

Moving from the CEDAW to the EFA movement, I first concentrate on the World Conference on Education for All (EFA), which brought about a focus on gender in education, aiming to reduce gender disparity by focusing on women and girls (UNESCO, 1990). One of the main goals in the EFA documents (the World Declaration on EFA and the Framework for Action) is to universalize access and to promote equity (UNESCO, 1990). My initial analysis of these documents shows that equity involves access to education in order to achieve and maintain an acceptable level of learning. Moreover, access is also linked to the idea of improved quality in education and the removal of obstacles that hamper active participation (UNESCO, 1990). Looking further into the EFA movement, particularly the global monitoring reports published by UNESCO since 2002, I have chosen to focus only on the first report from 2002 and the latest report (at the time of writing this chapter) from 2010 (UNESCO, 2002, 2010). My brief analysis of how these reports use the terms equality and equity shows an interesting pattern. First the term equality appears to have been much more prominent in the earlier report than equity. On the other hand, in the 2010 report equity appears to have just as much, if not more, significance as equality/inequality.

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

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

Driven by our ‘trust in numbers’, quantification “goes beyond the boundaries of locality and community…[that is] quantification is a technology of distance…[resulting in a] reliance on numbers and quantitative manipulation [which] minimizes the need for intimate knowledge and personal trust” (Porter, 1995, p. ix). Furthermore, the quality of a quantitative “evidence base, suggests that its appeal has as much to do with our psychological needs as our economic aspirations” (Fielding, 1999, p. 277). In his investigation, Porter (1995) invokes the work of Michael Oakeshott, Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno in order to provide him with a “critical view of modern, positivistic rationalism” (Porter, 2001, p. ix). Thus, within the EFA movement, it is argued that people’s trust in the numbers (e.g., gender parity) and scientific credibility is vested in apparent objectivity, achieved through quantification. In addition to the numbers, nation states are also pressured in other ways as a result of the EFA movement.

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

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

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

My analysis shows that there are various interpretations of the term equity, but that equality appears to have a much more stable meaning. The mapping below is constructed on the basis of a thorough analysis of the texts and an interpretation made by me. In recognition of intertextuality and what it entails (Allen, 2000), the interpretation is, as already mentioned, based on my analysis.
in which I attempt to communicate a representation of a field that is both personal and qualified in order to engage in a dialogue with the wider research community (Paulston, 1996).

Figure 1: Mapping the discourses on equality and equity in gender

Overall, the documents are represented by the circles with solid lines showing strong links between the documents, the concepts of equality and equity and how these terms are understood and used in the various global documents. Furthermore, the dotted lines represent a weaker link between the concepts and the documents themselves.

As can be seen above, the overriding concern appears to be one of justice and fairness in relation to the UDHR and CEDAW, whereas within the EFA movement there is more of a numbers focus in relation to access, completion, gender parity, etc. Despite the fact that equity is also linked to quality in education, it still appears that the quality aspect is couched within a quantitative evidence base (Porter, 1995). The 2010 GMR is interpreted as linking equality to a rights-based philosophy and therefore moving slightly away from the sole numerical focus in the earlier GMR. It would be pertinent, however, to consider if a rights-based philosophy simply means acceptance and not necessarily action (Subrahmanian, 2005).
CONCLUSION

If an overall conclusion can be drawn from the mapping in the previous section, of how the global consensus, the discourses, to advance gender equality and equity in education are understood, it is clear that these concepts reflect different aspects in relation to gender and education. The question we are left with is how this global consensus is understood and acted upon locally. In the remainder of this book, the chapters will, in some way, attempt to represent the local understanding and practices. Furthermore, if we consider the ways in which the mapper understands the concepts and how they are represented in the global documents, it becomes clear that the global documents display a misconception in which the focus clearly seems to be in terms of normative gains, where there has been a setting of standards and in developing an agenda about equality. The redistributive gains in terms of equity, where a need to transform choices and the conditions under which choices are made, have not necessarily been converted into practice, and as such there remains an acceptance, but perhaps too little in terms of action (Subrahmanian, 2005). Furthermore, my analysis confirms that “there is no consensus as to the precise difference between these two terms, exactly what they mean, or how they should be used” (Aikman & Unterhalter, 2007, p. 23). The result is an ambiguous understanding of these concepts in relation to gender in education, which can be problematic in achieving the necessary changes in education in order to achieve true functional capability. As Connell (2010) reminds us:

The case for gender justice in education has often been made on the basis of ‘rights’. The global agenda in education can draw on a tradition of international rights statements, from the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, to the Declaration of the Rights of the Child. Yet ultimately, the case has to be an educational one, reflecting ideas of what makes good education. Good education is education that is just; the quality of education is defined by the quality of social life generated by the capacities [capabilities] that education yields (p. 613).

NOTES

1 The present chapter is reprinted and slightly revised from an earlier version in a volume edited by Weidman and Jacob (2011) with the editors’ and publisher’s permission.
2 Sen traces the roots of this approach to Aristotle’s writings in both The Nicomachean Ethics and Politics.
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