

## **GENDER EQUALITY IN EDUCATION**

### **1. Background**

The Democratic Government of South Africa recognized that women have been subordinated throughout their lives and there is a need to take appropriate measures to ensure gender equality. The Department of Education recognized this by including principles of gender equality in a number of its policies.

In order to implement these, the former Minister of Education, Professor Bhengu, appointed a Gender Equity Task Team (GETT) in 1996. The terms of reference of the Task Team were "to investigate and advise the Department of Education on the establishment of a permanent Gender Equity Unit in the Department. In cooperation with the Provincial Departments of Education, through the Heads of Education Departments Committee (HEDCOM) the Gender Equity Unit advises the Director-General on all aspects of gender equity in the Education system, and in particular:

- .. Identify means of correcting gender imbalances.
- .. Imbalances in enrollments, dropouts, subject choice, career paths and performance.
- .. Advise on the educational and social desirability and legal implications of single sex schools.
- .. Propose guidelines to address sexism in curricula, textbooks, teaching and guidance.
- .. Propose affirmative action strategies for increasing the representation of women in professional leadership and management positions, and for increasing the influence and authority of women leaders.
- .. Propose a strategy to counter and eliminate sexism, sexual harassment and gender violence throughout the education system.
- .. Develop close relations with the organized teaching profession, organized student bodies, the Education Labour Relations Council, national women's organizations and other organizations whose cooperation would be essential in pursuing the aims of the unit.

The GETT Report is comprehensive. It covers every level of the education system and contains over 40 pages of recommendations. It points the way the national and provincial Departments of Education can spearhead strategies and action towards gender equity and human justice in South Africa.

The proposed vision, mission and priorities of the Ministry/Department of Education, as set out in this Memorandum, derive by and large from the GETT Report. The Report serves as an instrument for transforming the education system into a more equitable one in terms of gender, both quantitatively and qualitatively

### **2. Vision and Mission**

It is proposed that our vision should be a gender sensitive education system that facilitates the development of a non-sexist society, as envisaged in the Constitution.

Three principal concerns should constitute the mission of the Ministry/Department of Education. First, *to mainstream gender* in all educational functions, as opposed to treating gender equity, as well as other equity concerns, as add-on functions. Second, *to build capacity* among all stakeholders to implement gender equity policy and programs. Third, *to reduce the incidence of sex-based and gender-based violence and harassment* in the education system as a whole.

### **3. Priorities**

Taking into account the complexity of gender-related functions and its cross cutting nature, the Directorate for Gender Equity has set the following set of priorities:

- .. The formulation of a national Gender Equity Policy Statement and Platform for Action in education, based on the recommendation of the Gender Equity Task Team Report. The policy will facilitate the introduction of basic uniformity for dealing with gender equity matters in the ten Departments of Education. i.e. national Department of Education and nine provincial Departments of Education. The process is in its final stage.
- .. Facilitate the establishment of appropriate structures at national and provincial level to mainstream gender in all educational functions. Mainstreaming gender means that everybody should take the

responsibility for ensuring there is gender equity in all policy, programs, practices and procedures in each Directorate.

.. Facilitate the extension of gender disaggregated data as part of the Department's Education Management Information System (EMIS). This information will assist us to fulfill our planning functions and to measure whether policies and programs are succeeding in addressing gender inequalities.

.. Facilitate the setting up of programs to eradicate sex-based and gender-based violence and harassment in the education system. Quality education is predicated on students being able to participate in education safely, confidently and without fear, and teachers being able to teach free of menace and harassment. These programs should emanate from the gender equity policy where in the responsibilities of managers of educational institutions are clearly set out as to how to prevent discrimination and harassment from occurring at educational institutions and how to manage these behaviors effectively when they occur.

.. Monitor and evaluate progress made on gender representivity throughout the education system.

.. Propose popular version of the GETT report. The production of the popular version of the GETT Report is in progress. The final version will be out to schools in March 2002.

### **3. Managing sexual violence in schools**

A School-based module on Managing Sexual harassment and Gender-Based Violence has been developed. The Module is divided into 8 workshops covering aspects such as: gender violence and sexual harassment, homophobia, abuse of learners, school policy on sexual harassment, school management teams and sexual harassment, gender and HIV/AIDS, counseling and healing. This module will serve as a handbook for both learners and educators. The Module will be out to schools in March 2002.

### **4. Gender Mainstreaming**

The National Gender Coordinating Committee (NGCC) composed of Gender Focal Persons (GFPs) from each provincial Education Department has been set up. This is a vehicle used by the Directorate to Coordinate and monitor gender mainstreaming in the provincial Education Department.

### **6. Functions of the Directorate**

.. To identify areas where gender has not yet been included in the education system.

.. To monitor and coordinate the process within provinces.

.. To evaluate reports and policies and identify areas of concern and develop methods to address those concerns.

.. To evaluate common areas of success and develop methods for sharing between provinces.

.. To ensure that the Department provides and raises gender-disaggregated data in their work.

.. To coordinate an effective networking structure between stakeholders, e.g. inter-departmental, provincial, national and international structures.

.. To coordinate and promote gender equity within the Department.

.. To review D

.. Departmental policy and planning in line with the national gender policy framework.

.. To monitor and provide statistics for gender equity.

### **7. The Equity in the Classroom Project (EIC)**

The EIC Project recognizes the participation of the girl-child in the education system: equal access to all school subjects, education and professions. It is a complement to basic education reform activities to improve girls' persistence, achievement and completion. This project was launched in South Africa in 2000 by Creative Associates International (Washington DC)

### **8. Training for women in and into management and leadership positions**

The main objective of this training program is to have empowered and confident women managers who effectively manage their areas of responsibility and availability of prospective women managers who are ready to take up leadership and management roles. The project will commence in April 2002 and will run up

to the year 2005 culminating with the compilation of a conference report on women in and into management and leadership positions.

## **8. Measurable achievements**

- .. Gender-sensitive policies have been developed as a result:
- .. Housing allowance, pension benefits, medical allowances are accessible to women educators irrespective of marital status
- .. Women are now illegible to occupy any position in the work place for which they may suitably qualify (Employment Equity Act)
- .. Programs for Women in Management and Leadership positions have been developed.
- .. Adult Basic Education and Training (ABET) programs are in place to address the needs of women who were denied their rights to education and employment by legacies of the past
- .. Programs of Men against Women Abuse are in place. The Departmental Men's Forum addresses the issue of gender-based violence against women and girls.