RESEARCH PAPER

ANALYSIS OF GENDER REPRESENTATION IN BASIC LEVEL ENGLISH TEXTBOOKS IN GHANA

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ABSTRACT
Textbooks are known to influence the behaviours and worldview of children. Apart from imparting critical knowledge to pupils, textbooks also encourage pupils to form certain perceptions and stereotypes, including the 'appropriate' gender-specific roles in society. This paper examined gender stereotypes in the content and design of the Pupil's English textbook at the Basic Level in Ghana using content analysis. The study revealed that, as teaching materials, the English Pupil's Books 1, 2 and 3 displayed gross gender bias that reinforces the stereotypical roles of males and females in Ghanaian society. This does not reflect the development of society towards equality between men and women since there was no equality in how both genders are represented in the textbooks.

Keywords: Gender, stereotype, gender stereotype, textbooks

INTRODUCTION
One of the primary goals of the United Nations is the achievement of gender equality and total development of all global citizens whether male or female, and to empower females especially, giving them the confidence and opportunity to be all they can be, and not to be particularly hindered by their gender (UNESCO, 2015). Thus, the quest for gender equity and parity has been on the UN's agenda for a long time.

It is widely accepted that eliminating gender stereotyping that casts males and females in certain roles would result in individual and societal development. This is because 'gender stereotyping places unhealthy demands on both sexes which inhibit their natural talents and interests from developing, and consequently limit economic progress and social cohesion' (Council of Europe, 2015:6).

Studies (Asatoorian, Baringer, Campbell, Desai, Jie, and Kanthoul, 2011; Mustapha, 2012; Shah, 2012; Lee and Collins, 2009; UNESCO, 2015) have shown that issues of gender inequality exist in textbooks in both developed and developing countries. This is a disturbing phenomenon because "a high level of stereotyping introduced in children's textbooks tend to create biased beliefs that are learned as soon as a child is enrolled in school since stereotypical views of both men and women emerge from

pictures, texts and vocabulary read from their books" (Parke and Stewart, 2001:348).

As a result, governments, institutions and agencies are implored to ensure that their policies, programmes and activities foster gender equality, eschewing all forms of gender stereotyping and creating a level playing ground for both males and females.

Although the issue of gender equality in textbooks has been thoroughly researched into (Gupta and Yin, 1990; Mkuchu, 2004; Gouvias and Alexopoulos, 2016), most of the studies done focused on upper primary and senior high schools. Based on the assertion that children form stereotypical views in their early ages (Signorella, Bigler and Liben, 1993; Yee and Brown, 1994), it is important that the necessary attention is given to gender stereotyping at the lower primary levels of education in Ghana. This is typically because it is at this basic level that the foundation of education is built. In spite of this, little attention has been given to analysing the contents of such textbooks.

This study analyses gender stereotyping indications in three (3) lower primary English textbooks titled *Simplified English*, pupil's books 1, 2, and 3, which have been approved for use in the Kumasi Metropolis of Ghana by the Ministry of Education. The English Textbooks were selected because English language is a core subject taught at all levels of education in Ghana, and also, being the main lingua franca for official cross-cultural communication. The purpose of the study was to investigate gender representation and stereotypical issues from visual, conversational and linguistics points of view.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE
Role of education (textbooks) in forming gender stereotypes
It has been established that positive and negative stereotyping, especially with respect to gender roles, begin at an early age in humans.

Some studies assert that children, from their early developmental stages, begin to develop concepts of stereotypes regarding the roles of males and females in society (Signorella, Bigler and Liben, 1993; Yee and Brown, 1994). Most children at this stage spend the major part of their development years, going through one educational system or the other. This brings to the fore the role of education. Schools occupy a unique position in society, playing a fundamental role in promoting gender equality (Council of Europe, 2015) among children. Achieving gender neutrality and balance in the classroom is guided by pedagogic approaches, curriculum content, textbooks and other learning materials, which serve as vehicles for socialisation (Brugeilles and Cromer, 2009).

In many developing countries such as Ghana, textbooks have been used as vehicles to define which knowledge to pass on to the next generation and what competencies to foster, sometimes assuming some political stances since they reflect "a society's educational canon and the constant negotiation processes that shape it" (Mochizuki, 2017:3). The socio-cultural norms of a society are imbibed in these textbooks. As such, the beliefs and behavioural patterns of children tend to be affected by the kind of learning materials they are exposed to at the early stages of their education.

Many behaviour patterns are formed from what we read, observe and are exposed to. Likewise, textbooks teach children what behaviour is appropriate or inappropriate and so they serve as a source where children acquire knowledge on gender stereotypes (Turner-Bower, 1996). In fact, it has been proven that the child observes and learns about the society around him or her primarily through the medium of textbooks (Cincotta, 1978). Textbooks have thus been 'the most potential instruments which help in building up desirable attitudes in children' (Sumalatha and Ramakrishnaiah, 2004:57). Indeed, it has been reported that students spend as much as 80 to 95% of classroom time using textbooks, with teachers making most of their instructional decisions based on these same textbooks (Sadker and Zittleman, 2007). This means that the content of textbooks must be devoid of all forms of gender inequality and discrimination if gender stereotyping is to be eliminated.

Gender representation in primary textbooks
Visual and linguistic representation of gender has been a subject of research for many years because "the content and illustrations presented in textbooks may promote positive and negative thoughts about self, sex, occupations, life expectations and life chances (Mkuchu, 2004 as cited in Toçi and Aliu, 2013:33). This consequentially affects the development of individuals impacting on the progress of a country. As a result, there have been concerted efforts by national and international bodies to rid textbooks of stereotypical ideologies, and to promote gender equality and parity. Despite these efforts, there are significant literature alluding to male dominance in visual and linguistic representations in English textbooks used by children in both developed and developing economies in spite of the sense of awareness shown by writers and publishers of such materials.

Wu and Liu (2015) studied three sets of primary English textbooks used in mainland China from 1978 to 2003 using both textual and visual analyses. This diachronic analysis showed women participation increased within the study period even though "men greatly outnumber women in all textbooks"(2015:125). The female gender was represented in less highly social statuses but mostly linked with domestic roles. Gender bias still persisted in the contents of the textbooks, with female invisibility in texts and illustrations, gender stereotyping in occupational roles and school activities, and inequality in utterances and instances of female and male appearance in dialogue. This study has been corroborated by Xiong, He and Li (2017) in their studies of English textbooks used in primary schools in Guangzhou, a metropolitan city in South China and Lee and Collins (2009) in their study of 10 Australian English language textbooks.

Law and Chan (2004) visually analysed the roles played by males and females from 5,180 pictures drawn from a sample of 108 Chinese Language textbooks used in Hong Kong during the period 1995 to 2000. The study reported on the proportion of male and female characters representation; the settings in which these characters appear, their portrayal in domestic or non-domestic roles, and the kinds of occupational roles these characters were portrayed in. Even though they reported the presence of gender biasness and stereotyping, in comparing their work to previous studies, they asserted to a reduction in the extent of gender stereotyping in some regards. This assertion was supported by Lee (2014). He asserted that there has been an increase in gender equity in Hong Kong English language textbooks with increased female visibility both visually and textually. But there is a perpetuation of some stereotyped images and the portrayal of women in limited range of social roles than men, emphasizing its potential impact on children within the framework of social cognitive theory.

Although much progress has been made in bridging the gender representation gap in primary school textbooks in the 21st century (Lewandowski, 2014), cultural dynamics still places some constraints in the full realisation of gender equality (Lee 2016). In his study of Japanese English as a Foreign Language (EFL) textbooks, a culture where male supremacy has been well noted, he opined the evidence of the authors' gender awareness, including common use of gender-neutral vocabulary and a neutral term of address, a balanced distribution of male and female speakers and their amount of talk but cautioned that there was underrepresentation of women and their achievements in these contemporary Japanese textbooks. He also alluded to the fact that men were portrayed in a wider range of social roles than women, and the depiction of men using material and cognitive processes as against women's relational processes. He also noted a gender dichotomy in mixed-sex dialogues with a tendency for men to provide information and for women to seek information. This suggests that men are more physically and cognitively active than women, a stereotypical belief prevalent in many cultures (Sulaimani, 2017; Sternberg and Williams, 2009).

Even though there is evidence that authors of textbooks are becoming sensitive to issues of gender equality and representation, the reality is that the ideal of a truly balanced treatment of men and women have yet to be achieved (Lee and Collins, 2009), while studies have shown that gender stereotypes influence pupils' aca-

demic aspirations and performance (Mburu and Nyagah, 2012).

METHODOLOGY

The study is mainly a descriptive research based on the content analysis of three English language Textbooks – *Simplified English* – used in Ghanaian Primary Schools based on a quantitative research approach.

These textbooks were selected purposively because they had been approved by Government in 2012 and were still in use. The study was conducted to evaluate the kind of gender roles the books promote, and measure how much of gender stereotypical text and illustrations were presented in these publications. The numerical nature of the approach helped to gather statistical trends in the analysis of the results. This research method was adopted because it allowed for the organisation, summarisation and presentation of data in percentiles.

The instrument used for the study was content analysis. The steps used to examine the content of the textbooks included selection, examination and study of the books. Content analysis is a kind of quantitative method which involves the counting of frequencies (Franzosi, 2008). It is a common method of textbook analysis used in various studies (Wade, 1993; Hogben, and Waterman, 1997; Parker, Larkin and Cockburn, 2017). Content analysis describes a family of analytic approaches ranging from impressionistic, intuitive, interpretive analyses to systematic, and strict textual analyses (Rosengren, 1981). Content analysis could go beyond merely counting words to examining language intensely for classifying large amounts of text into an efficient number of categories that represent similar meanings (Weber, 1990).

The selected textbooks were thus examined and studied to have a thorough appreciation of their contents regarding gender representation and biasness. Based on these thematic areas – visual, conversational and linguistics analyses – a systematic recording and tabulation were made of the characters as depicted in the books. The following were the underlying variables that were looked at under the thematic areas:

- Male and female characters in appearance.
- Male and female occupational roles with respect to science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEAM) (e.g. doctor, designer, inventor and chemist).
- Domestic roles of males and females (e.g. mother, father, daughter and son).
- Names of males and females mentioned textually.
- The number of male and female appearances in the image.
- Other activities males and females engaged in.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The content analysis of the books included visual, conversational and linguistics analyses. The visual analysis includes frequent representation of male and female characters, occupational roles, domestic activities and other activities that male and female engage in. Conversational analysis includes frequency of occurrence in dialogue, first character in speaking and response of characters in conversation and linguist analysis consists of gender specific nouns and gender-neutral nouns.

Visual analysis

For the visual analysis, the frequency of representation of male and female characters, occupational roles, domestic activities and other activities that male and female engaged were keenly looked at. The analysis is categorised into three parts: male and female representation frequency, occupational depiction and domestic depiction as shown in Table 1.

Male and female representation frequency

It is clearly shown from the table that, male characters appeared more often (685 instances) than female characters (335) in the three books studied. The table also shows a highest occurrence of the male child across all the studied books. The outcome of the analysis showed male characters dominate females in terms of appearance in images. The Simplified English Pupil's Books 1 – 3 were thus found to have unequal representation in favour of males than females in terms of character appearances.

Generally, looking at the trend of males and

Table 1: Male and female representation frequency for images

Title of book	Total number of illustrations	Number of appearances				Percentage (%) representation				Dominance	
		Man	Boy	Woman	Girl	Man (%)	Boy (%)	Woman (%)	Girl (%)	Male (%)	Female (%)
Simplified English Pupil's Book 1	283	64	136	35	48	23	48	12	17	71	29
Simplified English Pupil's Book 2	417	102	178	55	82	24	43	13	20	67	33
Simplified English Pupil's Book 3	320	74	131	39	76	23	41	12	24	64	36
Total	1020	240	445	129	206						

females character appearances, it can be deduced that the ratio of male to female is approximately 2:1 from Book 1 through to Book 3 which means that males appeared in each book twice as much as females.

Occupational roles depicted for male and female characters

The study concentrated on five sectors: Agriculture, transport, business, health and education. These sectors were chosen because they were the various occupations that were identified in the textbooks. The analyses were done comparing male and female roles depicted in illustrations of the listed occupations in the books.

In the *Simplified English Pupil's Book 1*, the male characters were dominant in the illustrations used: males consisted of 100% for Education, 92% for Health, 83% for Business, 74% for Transport and 80% for Agriculture, as opposed to 0%, 8%, 16%, 25% and 20% for female representations, respectively.

In the *Simplified English Pupil's Book 2*, the percentages of male characters for the listed occupations exceeded those of the female characters except in Education where 80% of the illustrations depicted female roles.

In the *Simplified English Pupil's Book 3*, the number of male characters exceeded the number of female characters in the field of Agriculture, Business, and Health. The ratio of male to female in *Book 1* is more than 3:1 and the ratio in Books 2 and 3 is less than 2:1.

From the above, it is seen that males are more frequently portrayed in four out of five occupational sectors. It is only in Education that females appeared more often than males. In Agriculture, the males are portrayed to be frequently involved in its related activities except in Pupils Book 2. In Pupil's Book 1, a single illustration depicted a female farming with a hoe. In Transport, male dominance was observed compared to females; males were portrayed as drivers and owners of vehicles whiles only a few females were depicted as receiving parcels in the transport office. In Business, all males in this sector were identified with stereotypical

jobs such as businessmen, salesmen, company directors, office workers, etc. None of the images used in the textbooks breaks the stereotype trend towards female characters. It was the same in the Health sector, where all medical doctors portrayed were males whiles females were assigned to nursing. In summary, all the textbooks give the impression that the healthcare industry is male oriented, portraying a gender bias scenario.

Table 2 indicates the total number of domestic roles or activities that both males and females engaged in all the three textbooks. It can therefore be deduced that the frequency of females assigned domestic roles in images of the three textbooks is particularly high compared with their male counterparts representing 13 and 3 images respectively. Cooking had the highest appearance in all three books, followed by washing. Male characters were assigned roles pertaining to watering, cow feeding and sweeping. It is evident that female characters were seen engaged in domestic activities more often than their male counterparts in all the images used in the textbooks, thus, showing gender biasness as shown in Tables 2 and 3.

Other activities male and female engage in
It is shown that in all the books, males can be seen engaged in football as a sporting activity. Among the three textbooks, only Pupil's Book 1 had female characters engaging in football. Also, writing was participated in by both male and female characters in all three textbooks.

Additional activities identified under indoor, sport or outdoor in all the three books were high jumping, jogging, *oware*, drawing, watching television, listening to radio, drumming, singing, going to school, fighting, brushing, colouring, chopping wood and climbing. The male characters are observed to engaged in more of these activities than their female counterparts which represents gender bias.

Conversational analysis
Conversational analysis includes dialogues and reading passages. Dialogues are used for teaching pupils speaking skills. Wong (2009) proposes that dialogues in language textbooks provide learners with models so that they know how to communicate in real contexts. The focus of analysis in this section will be on dialogue (Table 4). In all the three textbooks used for

Table 2: Domestic activities of the images identified in the textbooks

Title of book	Domestic activities	Total number of illustration	Frequency Males	Females	Percentage Males (%)	Females (%)
Simplified English Pupil's Book 1	Feeding the cow	-	-	-	-	-
	Watering	-	-	-	-	-
	Washing	-	-	-	-	-
	Cooking	2	-	2	-	100
Simplified English Pupil's Book 2	Feeding the cow	1	1	-	100	-
	Watering	1	1	-	100	-
	Washing	5	-	5	-	100
	Cooking	3	-	3	-	100
Simplified English Pupil's Book 3	Feeding the cow	-	-	-	-	-
	Watering	-	-	-	-	-
	Washing	-	-	-	-	-
	Cooking	3	-	3	-	100
	Sweeping	1	1	-	100	-
Total		**16**	**3**	**13**		

Other activities male and female engage in

Table 3: Other activities male and female engage in regarding images used

TITLE OF BOOK	CHARACTERS	ACTIVITIES
Simplified English Pupil's Book 1	Males	**Sports:** *football*, high jumping, *tug of war*, jogging, *running* **Indoors:** Oware, *reading,* drawing, writing, *watching television*, *sleeping, eating* **Outdoors:** playing in the park, singing, plucking flowers, killing a bird with catapult, camping around fire
	Females	**Sports:** *football, tug of war, running* **Indoors:** *reading, watching television, sleeping, eating* **Outdoors:** dancing, playing ampe, playing with a doll
Simplified English Pupil's Book 2	Males	**Sports:** football, running **Indoors:** drinking, *writing*, watching television, listening to radio, *sleeping,* eating **Outdoors:** drumming, singing, *cycling,* going to school, fighting
	Females	**Sports:** **Indoors:** reading, *writing* **Outdoors:** *cycling,* dancing
Simplified English Pupil's Book 3	Males	**Sports:** football, *swimming*, jumping **Indoors:** brushing, eating, writing, sweeping, colouring, **Outdoors:** playing football, camp around fire, chopping wood, climbing, cycling
	Females	**Sports:** *swimming*, running **Indoors:** sleeping, **Outdoors:** running, swimming

Table 4: Appearances in dialogues

Title of book	Total number of dialogue	Number of appearance		Total number of characters appearance	Percentage dominant	
		Males	Females		Males (%)	Females (%)
Simplified English Pupil's Book 1	17	21	14	35	60	40
Simplified English Pupil's Book 2	20	24	18	42	57	43
Simplified English Pupil's Book 3	12	35	33	68	51	49
Total	**49**	**80**	**65**	**145**		

study dialogues can be found in almost each unit of the textbooks. Three types of dialogues were identified that is *speech bubbles*, *self-contained dialogues* (i.e. dialogues not inserted in reading passages) and *embedded dialogues* in reading passages.

A total of 49 conversations identified in the textbooks, the male characters had the highest occurrence of 80 representing 168% out of 300% (100% for each book) for all the textbooks, whereas female characters had 65 representing 132% in all the textbooks. In all the three textbooks, it was only Pupil's Book 3 that had the closest figures for the male (35) and female (33) representing 51% and 49% respectively. All the other textbooks showed gross gender biasness in all the conversations.

First gender to appear in dialogues
Table 5 looks at the gender which appears first in dialogues identified in all the textbooks used for the study. Of the 49 dialogues identified across all levels of the textbooks, 31 male characters were the first to speak whereas the female characters assigned a first speech were 18. With respect to the individual textbooks, all the three textbooks show that the male characters spoke first. In Pupil's Book 1 males spoke first in 65% of the dialogues whiles females had 35%, In Pupil's Book 2 males spoke first 60% of the time and females 40%, whilst Pupil's Book 3 recorded 67% for the males and 33% for the females. These figures also reveal a trend where the male characters tend to speak

first more often than the female. This evidence adds weight to an African proverb that '*A woman is seen and not heard*'. This depicts a clear case of gender bias.

Responses in dialogues
Characters were grouped in terms of male to male responses, male to female, female to female and female to male responses in dialogue conversations as shown in Table 6. The total occurrences of dialogue responses in conversations identified in all the three textbooks were 59. Male to male responses dominated in Pupil's Book 1 and 2 with 14% and 15% respectively. Male to female responses recorded more appearances in Pupil's Book 3 (10%). Female to female responses in Book 1, Male to Female responses in Book 2, and Female to Male responses in Book 3 recorded the lowest appearances.

This trend in its small way still reveals biasness in conversational flow, which is usually from male to male, and/or male to female, in all the textbooks. This result confirms studies identified in the literature (Lee, 2018; Sulaimani, 2017; Sternberg and Williams, 2009) that the prevalent culture of male supremacy, and a system of dialogues where women tend to be at the receiving end of information, are major hindrances to attaining gender equality.

Discourse Analysis
According to Van Leeuwen (2008), discourse

Table 5: First in Appearance in dialogues

Title of book	Total number of dialogue conversations	First in appearance		Percentage	
		Males	Females	Males (%)	Females (%)
Simplified English Pupil's Book 1	17	11	6	65	35
Simplified English Pupil's Book 2	20	12	8	60	40
Simplified English Pupil's Book 3	12	8	4	67	33
Total	**49**	**31**	**18**		

Table 6: Dialogue response

Title of book	Characters	Number of occurrences in conversations	Percentage
Simplified English Pupil's Book 1	Male to Male	8	14
	Male to Female	8	14
	Female to Female	2	3
	Female to Male	5	8
Simplified English Pupil's Book 2	Male to Male	9	15
	Male to Female	2	3
	Female to Female	7	12
	Female to Male	3	5
Simplified English Pupil's Book 3	Male to Male	5	8
	Male to Female	6	10
	Female to Female	3	5
	Female to Male	2	3
Total		**59**	**100**

Table 7: Gender-neutral nouns in terms of text

Title of book	Gender neutral nouns	Frequency of occurrences	Percentage
Simplified English Pupil's Book 1	Parent	5	2
	Friend	12	4
	Family	9	3
	Children	6	2
	People	7	3
	Shopkeeper	3	1
Simplified English Pupil's Book 2	Patient	3	1
	Guest	1	0
	Person	1	0
	Friend	17	6
	Pupil	10	4
	Children	16	6
	Family	7	3
	People	12	4
	Partner	6	2
	Classmate	5	2
	Shopkeeper	4	1
Simplified English Pupil's Book 3	People	13	5
	Pupil	15	5
	Classmate	11	4
	Friend	43	16
	Parent	9	3
	Children	16	6
	Family	14	5
	Student	7	3
	Person	6	2
	Partner	19	7
	Shopkeeper	0	0
Total		**276**	**100**

Table 8: Gender-specific nouns within analysed text

Title of book	Gender specific nouns	Frequency of occurrences	Percentage
Simplified English Pupil's Book 1	Boy	12	5
	Girl	9	4
	Man	3	1
	Woman	4	2
	Father	5	2
	Mother	8	3
	Grandfather	3	1
	Grandmother	3	1
Simplified English Pupil's Book 2	Boy	7	3
	Father	16	6
	Girl	17	7
	Mother	34	13
	Grandfather	2	1
	Grandmother	1	0
	Woman	-	-
Simplified English Pupil's Book 3	Girl	12	5
	Boy	15	6
	Father	42	17
	Mother	31	12
	Man	29	11
	Woman	1	0
	Grandfather	-	-
	Grandmother	-	-
Total		**254**	**100**

analysis refers to 'the re-contextualization of social practice which means using discourses as resources for representing social practices in text' (p. 6). He further extends to the characters that can be identified by the character's unique identity, typically realised by nouns in text. One way this can be realised is the 'compounding of nouns' denoting an activity and 'highly generalised categorisations' which includes man, woman, boy, girl, etc.

Gender nouns that do not depict gender dispensations were considered and analysed, their frequency of appearance considered, and percentages calculated based on the three textbooks, rounded off to one-decimal place. The total frequency of occurrence for gender-neutral nouns is 276 as shown in Table 7. In

the three textbooks, *'friend'* as a neutral noun got the highest number of occurrences of 72 out of the 276 denoting 26% and *'children'* recorded 38 appearances, representing 14%. Both *'Person'* and *'Shopkeeper'* had the least figure of 7 with a percentage of 2%, in all three books. This reveals that the most dominant neutral noun in all the textbooks is *friend*, followed by *children*.

The gender-specific nouns looked at were *boy*, *girl*, *father*, *mother*, *man*, *woman*, *grandfather* and *grandmother* (Table 8). The cumulative frequency of these nouns in all the selected textbooks was 254. It was identified that the gender-specific nouns with the highest frequency in all the three textbooks is *'Mother'* appearing 73 times representing 28%. The

second highest gender-specific noun is *'father'* with 63 appearances representing 25%. *'Grandmother'* had the lowest of 4 representing 1% in all the textbooks.

To conclude, the Pupil's Books 1, 2, and 3 had total frequencies for male-specific nouns outnumbering those of female-specific nouns by 134 out of the 254 occurrences of all gender-specific nouns, thus portraying a gender biasness in favour of males.

CONCLUSION
This study revealed that gender stereotypes in Government-approved textbooks are still a problem needing a critical look, and conscious efforts to tackle it at the grassroots of our educational system.

This study examined how males and females are represented in, as well as issues of gender stereotyping in Government-approved English textbooks for lower primary, using visual analysis (images and illustrations), conversational analysis and discourse analysis as the thematic foci. Images and various lexical constructs and tools used in selected textbooks were analysed to spot any form of sexist representations. The results indicate an existence of gender-biasness in favour of males, in the images and conversational elements used in the textbooks. A discourse analysis also depicted the male character being the main giver of information in dialogues, whilst their female counterparts were mostly at the receiving end of mixed-sex dialogues. Some gender-neutral nouns used however did not depict gender biasness even though the use of gender-specific nouns saw a more male-biased representation in occupations mentioned.

The outcomes of this study conclude that the Government-approved English textbooks analysed do not wholly reflect a full attainment of the developmental goals of society towards achieving full equality in gender representation. between men and women since there was no equality in their representation. Integrating more female references in the textbooks for children especially at the basic level, as well as including more non-stereotypical references to both genders could help eradicate gender stere-

otype in the long run. This study corroborates the views of Blumberg (2007) when he stressed "textbooks worldwide around 2000 continued to show distinct patterns of gender bias: females were often under-represented or absent, and depictions of males and females in both the professional and domestic spheres relied on traditional gender stereotypes" (UNESCO 2015, p 178).

One important area that was not looked at but necessary for the achievement of gender equality and parity in the classrooms is the role played by the teacher. We believe this is an area that needs further investigation to observe how teachers handle the gender biased contents in textbooks.

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