

Gender Performance in Home Economics at Mandanga Primary School in Mongu District of Western Province, Zambia: A Comparative Study

Sishuwa Sishuwa¹, Likando Mundia (PhD)²

¹Student, Mongu Catholic College of Education, Zambia

²Mongu Catholic College of Education, Zambia

Abstract: the purpose of the study was to compare the performance of boys and girls in home economics at grade five school level at Mandanga Primary school in Mongu district of Western Province in Zambia. The research instruments used in this research included classroom observations, focused groups and semi-structured interviews. Data collected was analysed inductive approach using constant comparative data analysis. The study has revealed that there was balance on the gender performance of Home Economics among the grade five classes at Mandanga Primary School in Mongu district of Western Province in Zambia.

Keywords: Achievement, gender, infrastructure, perception of home economics.

I. INTRODUCTION

According to Ministry of General Education (2013) Home Economics is an interdisciplinary field of study which endeavors to equip students with knowledge, practical and social skills, attitudes that are essential for success in a global society. The subject seeks to equip learners with life skills that will enable them to cope with changes in a technological, socio-economical, and multi-cultural society. Home Economics as a subject in the Zambian educational system has continued to receive low status among teachers and learners. It has been regarded as a subject for the female folk and the weak. Men who take up home economics as a teaching subject are considered to be weak and are looked down upon by society. At primary school level Home Economics is taught from grade 5-7 as a subject to both boys and girls. The purpose of this study was to compare the performance of girls and boys in Home Economics.

Research questions:

- I. What are the perceptions of learners towards home economics?
- II. Who perform better than the other between male and female learners in Home Economic?
- III. What challenges do learners face in learning Home Economics?

II. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

In Asthana (2001)'s study it observed that, no significant varies in achievement between boys and girls as they start acquainted with Home Economics. None the less different favoring female student began to emerge with time. Although these studies addressed gender related differences the distinction is usually made by sex i.e. considering characteristic rather than the social cultural background that shape the gender identity. However, gender and sex are not synonymous.

DES (2006) states that since the seventies quantitative research began, where sex was considered as an independent variable that determine the kind of Home Economics skills of men and women, based on their achievement, participation, and performances. The result of these studies showed small different between men and women, which did not really explain the reason for the dissimilarity achievement, participation and performance in high education, where more advanced Home Economics is taught.

III. METHODOLOGY

The study used a qualitative research paradigm. This approach was ideal because aimed at capturing the in-depth views of respondents. The case study was used as a research design. Purposive sampling procedure was employed in the study to select 36 grade 5 learners and 3 class teachers at Mandanga Primary School. Data collection instruments for this study included semi-structured interviews, focused group discussions, document analysis and classroom observation. The data was analysed qualitatively by constantly comparing data collected.

IV. RESULTS

Perceptions of Home Economics

Learners were asked to explain the meaning of Home Economics in order to establish their perception and background understanding of the subject. The finding shows that Home Economics is perceived as a subject where learners are taught home related skills as indicated by some of the respondents said that :

“H.E is a subject where we learn how to cook different types of food”. (Pp.01)

“Home Economics is all about learning how to cook different types of food”. (Pp.36)

“Home Economics is all about learning home activities such as cooking, hygiene, washing, ironing and many others”.(Pp.25)

Gender performance of learners

With regard to the performance of learners in Home Economics the study revealed that in some classes boys were performing better than girls and in other classes girls recorded high marks than boys in H.E. However in other classes both girls and boys were recording same range of marks. In this context respondents had the following to say:

“In our class girls’ scores high marks in H.E than boys” (Tr. 01)

“In my class boys perform poor in the subject because they believe Home Economics is a subject for girls”. (Tr.02)

“Sometimes girls perform better than boys and sometimes boys perform better than girls”. (Tr.03)

During document analysis of test score for the different classes it was revealed that the performance of boys and girls varied in that in some classes boys performed better than girls while in other classes; girls performed better than boys.

It was also revealed that the implementation of Home Economics faced many challenges. During the semi-structured interviews and document analysis it was revealed that there were many challenges in the implementation of Home Economics. From the study these challenges were low self- images, inadequate school facilities, insufficient teaching and learning materials and lack of specialised subject teachers. The following were the responses from the teachers:

“Our school does not have home economics workshop and this makes it difficult to conduct practical HE lessons” (Tr.01)

“The school has no teachers specialised in Home Economics so teaching it is haphazardly done and this increases the failure of both female and male students in the subject as well as class repetition rates”(Tr.03)

“The available material does not clearly explain the content”. *“There is no teachers’ reference book”* (Tr.02)

V. DISCUSION OF THE RESULTS

Gender performance in Home Economics

The study revealed that learners perceived Home Economics in many different ways. However, the common perception of Home Economics was that it was all about cooking and washing of plates. This was in contrary to Westfall (2009)

who perceived Home Economics as a field of study that focuses on factor that affects the well-being of individuals and families such as parenting, nutrition and housing. Perceptions that individuals have about something guide their reaction towards that something. Since Home Economics was perceived as a subject that is only about cooking and washing plates it was therefore associated to girls than boys. Spafford (2007) states that, home economics in Uganda was from practical to theory. There were taught sewing starting with small samples.

In terms of objective two which sought to find out the performance of boys and girls in Home Economics the research revealed that in some class girls performed better than boy in the Home economics whereas in other classes boys performed better than girls. The findings were in line with Asthana (2001)’s study which revealed that there was no significant varies in achievement between boys and girls as they start acquainted with Home Economics. This is similar to the study by Lorenzoni (2006) in the United States of America which showed that the gender differences in home economics performance are diminishing. The performance gap between girls and boys in home economics has been narrowing.

The third objective of the study was meant to find out the challenges associated with the implementation of Home Economics. It was revealed that the implementation of Home Economics faced challenges like inadequate Home Economics facilities, lack appropriate Home Economics workshop, no teaching and learning materials and negative attitudes towards Home Economics. The integration of Home Economics in Creative and Technology Studies (CTS) was another challenge as it led to poor performance of learners in Home Economics.

VI. CONCLUSION

In this study it has been revealed that there was no difference in the performance of girls and boys in Home Economics at grade five level in that in some classes boys performed better than girls whereas in some classes girls performed better than boys. In addition the implementation of Home Economics is affected by several factors such as provision of teaching and learning materials, attitudinal factors, and nature of the curriculum for CTS, teacher preparedness, policy stance on the subject and issues related of Continuing Professional Development.

VII. RECOMENDATIONS

Arising from the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made:

- i. Strengthening the school-based continuous professional development in Home Economics.
- ii. Training and deploying of Home Economics teachers at primary school level.
- iii. Encouraging men to take up Home Economics as a teaching subject.

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