

SECONDARY SCHOOL TEACHERS' UNDERSTANDING OF NAMIBIAN BOYS' UNDERACHIEVEMENT AND UNDER-PARTICIPATION IN EDUCATION

Roderick Fulata Zimba; Choshi D. Kasanda; Cynthy Kaliinasho Haihambo; Marius Kudumo; Hileni Magano Kapenda; Kashinaua Faustina Neshila; Mirjam Sheyapo

ABSTRACT

To create awareness on gender disparity in academic achievement between boys and girls, we conducted the Namibian boys' underachievement in education study (Zimba, et.al; 2023). We report on data from this study pertaining to secondary school teachers' understanding of the issue. Using a pragmatic parallel mixed methods research design, systematic and criterion sampling techniques, we administered structured questionnaires to 528 teachers. We also conducted focus group discussions with 115 of these teachers. According to teachers, some boys performed worse than girls because they withdrew from learning activities, were not interested in education, dropped out of school and they did not participate in learning activities. Teachers also reported that several parents undermined their sons' educational achievement by giving them too much freedom to roam around while strictly controlling the behaviour of their daughters, allowing their sons to abuse alcohol and drugs, not giving their sons chores to perform at home and not being concerned of their sons' education, welfare, and misconduct. In addition to reviewing educational policy to target and support boys' education, we have recommended that teachers should be made aware of differences in learning and socialization styles of boys and girls and that they should include the learning needs of boys in their teaching. We have also recommended that pre- and in-service teacher education programmes should sensitize and instil in teachers caring and nurturing attitudes towards boys who underachieve in education, raise awareness of gender disparity in education attainment that is in favour of girls and empower teachers to initiate programmes and attitudinal changes aimed at redressing the disparity. Without undermining educational benefits that have accrued to girls over the years, this could be done by drawing lessons and strategies for change from successful programmes targeting girls' education.

Key words: Boys, girls, disparity, parity, gender, educational underachievement, educational under-participation, Namibia, teachers, secondary schools

INTRODUCTION

At Namibia's Independence in 1990, there existed disparity in access to education by boys and girls, with girls being at a higher risk than boys of exclusion from education, underperformance and of not completing secondary school education. At the global level, the UN (1996), in the *Report of the Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing, 4-15 September 1995*, described the status of the girl child in education at that time in this way: "Although the number of educated children has grown in the past 20 years in some countries, boys have proportionately fared much better than girls. In 1990, 130 million children had no access to primary school; of these, 81 million were girls. This can be

attributed to such factors as customary attitudes, child labour, early marriages, lack of funds, teenage pregnancies and gender inequalities in society at large as well as in the family. In many cases, girls start to undertake heavy domestic chores at a very early age and are expected to manage both educational and domestic responsibilities, often resulting in poor scholastic performance and an early drop-out from schooling” (UN, 1996, p. 110). In the report, specific strategic objectives were set out to eliminate obstacles to the girl child’s education. Governments were mandated to implement the objectives. To participate in this process and that of the *Education for All* international programmes of action, Namibia put in place various programmes to support girls’ education. In many countries of the world, the implementation of the strategic objectives spelt out at the 1995 Beijing Women’s conference has removed many barriers to the girl child’s education and enabled her to substantially outperform the boy child in education (Reeves, 2022; UNESCO, 2022; Welmond and Gregory, 2021). In Namibia, there now exists gender disparity in academic achievement between boys and girls. With the exception of Kavango East, Kavango West and Kunene Educational Regions, at the Secondary School level, this disparity is in favour of girls (Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture, 2016-2018; Education Management Information System, ‘EMIS’, Namibia, 2012-2022). The 2019 enrolment figures as depicted in table 1 and the promotion, repetition and school-leaving rates given in table 2 exemplify this disparity.

Table 1: Percentage of female learners by school phases in each Educational Region in 2019

| Region | Total | Primary | | | Secondary | | |
|--------------|-------|------------------|----------------|----------------|--------------------|------------------|------------------|
| | | Subtotal Primary | Junior Primary | Senior Primary | Subtotal Secondary | Junior Secondary | Senior Secondary |
| ǀKharas | 51.0% | 50.0% | 49.0% | 51.2% | 54.1% | 53.4% | 55.1% |
| Erongo | 51.4% | 50.4% | 49.4% | 51.5% | 54.1% | 52.3% | 56.7% |
| Hardap | 50.6% | 49.8% | 48.7% | 50.5% | 54.4% | 54.2% | 54.8% |
| Kavango East | 49.7% | 49.5% | 48.5% | 50.5% | 50.3% | 50.8% | 49.8% |
| Kavango West | 49.0% | 48.9% | 48.1% | 50.0% | 49.5% | 50.7% | 47.0% |
| Khomas | 51.8% | 50.9% | 50.6% | 51.3% | 54.8% | 54.1% | 55.2% |
| Kunene | 49.7% | 49.9% | 50.7% | 48.9% | 49.1% | 49.4% | 48.3% |
| Ohangwena | 49.8% | 48.8% | 48.5% | 49.1% | 52.7% | 51.9% | 54.1% |
| Omaheke | 50.1% | 49.3% | 49.1% | 49.4% | 52.7% | 53.4% | 51.1% |
| Omusati | 49.5% | 48.6% | 48.1% | 49.0% | 52.1% | 51.1% | 53.8% |
| Oshana | 50.8% | 49.7% | 49.7% | 49.7% | 53.1% | 51.0% | 55.8% |
| Oshikoto | 49.3% | 48.1% | 48.3% | 48.0% | 52.3% | 51.0% | 54.1% |
| Otjozondjupa | 50.8% | 50.1% | 49.5% | 50.6% | 53.5% | 53.2% | 54.3% |
| Zambezi | 49.4% | 48.8% | 48.4% | 49.1% | 50.9% | 51.3% | 50.3% |
| National | 50.2% | 49.4% | 49.0% | 49.8% | 52.6% | 51.9% | 53.5% |

Source: EMIS, Namibia, 2019

Table 2: Promotion, repetition, and school-leaving rates in Grades 1-11 from 2018 to 2019

| Grade | Promotion Rates | | | Repetition Rates | | | School-Leaving Rates | | |
|----------|-----------------|---------|-------|------------------|---------|-------|----------------------|---------|-------|
| | Total | Females | Males | Total | Females | Males | Total | Females | Males |
| Average | 77.7% | 80.4% | 75.1% | 16.7% | 14.7% | 18.5% | 5.6% | 4.9% | 6.3% |
| Grade 1 | 78.7% | 82.2% | 75.4% | 19.7% | 16.5% | 22.7% | 1.6% | 1.3% | 1.9% |
| Grade 2 | 84.7% | 88.2% | 81.3% | 14.8% | 11.5% | 17.9% | 0.5% | 0.2% | 0.7% |
| Grade 3 | 86.7% | 90.0% | 83.5% | 13.4% | 10.1% | 16.4% | -0.1% | -0.1% | 0.0% |
| Grade 4 | 75.4% | 80.8% | 70.3% | 22.4% | 17.6% | 26.9% | 2.2% | 1.8% | 2.7% |
| Grade 5 | 79.3% | 82.8% | 75.8% | 18.3% | 15.2% | 21.4% | 2.4% | 2.0% | 2.8% |
| Grade 6 | 82.3% | 84.7% | 79.9% | 14.4% | 12.5% | 16.3% | 3.3% | 2.8% | 3.8% |
| Grade 7 | 87.5% | 89.4% | 85.5% | 9.2% | 7.8% | 10.6% | 3.3% | 2.8% | 3.9% |
| Grade 8 | 66.7% | 69.2% | 64.2% | 28.0% | 26.2% | 29.7% | 5.3% | 4.6% | 6.1% |
| Grade 9 | 59.2% | 60.4% | 58.0% | 39.3% | 40.5% | 38.0% | 1.5% | -0.8% | 4.0% |
| Grade 10 | 58.5% | 60.1% | 56.7% | 0.9% | 0.9% | 0.9% | 40.6% | 39.0% | 42.3% |
| Grade 11 | 96.1% | 96.3% | 95.8% | 2.8% | 3.0% | 2.6% | 1.1% | 0.7% | 1.6% |

Source: EMIS, Namibia, 2019

To illustrate the disparity in academic performance between boys and girls further we assessed their comparative academic achievement in English at the grade 12 level from 2016 to 2018. Table 3 reveals that on average girls obtained high grades in English Second Language than boys during the three year period. This finding is consistent with the UNESCO (2020) finding that globally, girls perform better than boys in Reading and Mathematics.

Table 3: Performance in English Second Language, Grade 12: 2016-2018 by gender

| Symbol | Grade 12 | | | | | | | | | | | |
|--------|----------|-------|--------|-------|-------|-------|--------|-------|-------|-------|--------|-------|
| | 2016 | | | | 2017 | | | | 2018 | | | |
| | Male | | Female | | Male | | Female | | Male | | Female | |
| | Total | % | Total | % | Total | % | Total | % | Total | % | Total | % |
| A | 17 | 0.19% | 32 | 0.33% | 16 | 0.17% | 50 | 0.49% | 23 | 0.23% | 67 | 0.62% |
| B | 41 | 0.47% | 85 | 0.88% | 65 | 0.72% | 152 | 1.49% | 71 | 0.73% | 182 | 1.69% |
| C | 199 | 2.30% | 380 | 3.93% | 223 | 2.49% | 354 | 3.48% | 260 | 2.68% | 532 | 4.95% |
| D | 546 | 6.31% | 749 | 7.75% | 565 | 6.29% | 787 | 7.74% | 749 | 7.73% | 1040 | 1.30% |
| E | 1298 | 15.0% | 1744 | 18.0% | 1542 | 17.2% | 1908 | 18.7% | 1902 | 19.6% | 2266 | 21.1% |
| F | 1959 | 22.6% | 2280 | 23.6% | 1994 | 22.3% | 2335 | 22.9% | 1905 | 19.6% | 2086 | 19.4% |
| G | 2217 | 25.6% | 2322 | 24.0% | 2439 | 27.2% | 2737 | 26.9% | 2404 | 24.8% | 2548 | 23.7% |
| U | 1158 | 13.3% | 928 | 9.6% | 940 | 10.5% | 749 | 7.37% | 1129 | 11.6% | 966 | 9.00% |
| I | 1173 | 13.5% | 1068 | 11.0% | 1108 | 12.3% | 1019 | 10.0% | 1181 | 12.1% | 976 | 9.09% |

| | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|--------------|-------------|-----------|-------------|-----------|-------------|-----------|-------------------|-----------|-------------|-----------|-------------------|-----------|
| X | 34 | 0.39 % | 70 | 0.22 % | 47 | 0.52 % | 72 | 0.70 % | 58 | 0.59 % | 68 | 0.63 % |
| Total | 8642 | | 9658 | | 8939 | | 1016 1 | | 9682 | | 1073 1 | |

Adapted from Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture, Directorate of National Examinations and Assessment (DNEA) statistics, 2018.

In the report: *A new generation: 25 years of efforts for gender equality in education* (UNESCO, 2020, p.1), this issue is elaborated upon in the following key findings:

- “Since 1995, the number of girls enrolled in primary and secondary school has risen by 180 million.
- Globally, equal numbers of girls and boys were enrolled in primary and secondary education in 2018.
- Female enrolment tripled in tertiary education; at the country level, gender disparity at men’s expense exists in 74% of the countries with data.
- Between 1995 and 2018, the percentage of countries with gender parity in education rose from 56% to 65% in primary, from 45% to 51% in lower secondary and from 13% to 24% in upper secondary education.
- Among the 56 countries with data for 2000-18, primary completion rates improved faster for girls than boys. In one-third of the 86 countries with 2013-18 data, girls were more likely to complete primary school than boys.”

These current global trends are consistent with what has happened in Namibia where more boys than girls under-participate and under-achieve in education (see table 2). A search for why the disparity existed was warranted. As part of the search, it was instructive to show how girls had been given more educational support than boys.

At the global level, the support for girls’ education has been promoted through initiatives that include the *Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (UN, 1995)*; *Report of the Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing, 4-15 September 1995 (UN, 1996)*; *United Nations Girls’ Education Initiative; Sustainable Development Goals (UN, 2021)*, *Convention on the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women; Girls’ Education in the 21st Century: Gender Equality, Empowerment, and Economic Growth (The World Bank, 2008)*.

At the African continental level, African girls have been supported in education through the avenues of the *Forum for African Women Educationalists (FAWE)*, *African Union Gender Policy (2009)*, *the Solemn declaration on gender equality in Africa (2004)*, and the *Continental Educational Strategy for Africa, 2016-2025*

At the Southern African Development Community (SADC) Regional level, girls’ education has been championed through the following instruments of the *SADC Protocol on gender and development (2008)* and the *SADC gender protocol Barometer (2013-2020)*.

At the national level, Namibian girls’ education has been supported by the Ministry of Gender Equality and Child Welfare (2007; 2015), through the gender mainstreaming in education programme of the Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture (2013; 2018; 2020) and by the Forum for African Women Educationalists- the Namibian chapter, (FAWENA).

While all these initiatives were put in place to support girls' education, few, if any, were specifically established in Namibia to target and support boys' education. Notwithstanding this, we wished to find out what teachers did to support boys' education. The support that girls received over the years increased their access to education, retention in education and their achievement in education. We wondered if similar support should be provided to boys in order to increase their achievement and participation in education.

Notwithstanding the call for support of boys' education, our intention was not to uncritically join in debates about boys being the new disadvantaged lot who were victims of an adverse backlash of empowering support given to girls over the years (Mills, et al., 2007; Mills, 2003; Weaver-Hightower, 2003). We wished to promote the improvement of boys' education without undermining educational gains that have accrued to girls over the years and without overlooking continuing girls' learning needs in schools.

Statement of the problem

The main purpose of the study on Namibian boys' underachievement and under-participation in education was to find out what accounted for the disparity in academic performance between boys and girls (Zimba, et.al., 2023). In this article, we report on data from this study that pertained to secondary school teachers' understanding of the disparity. We wished to find out from the teachers:

- Reasons why girls performed better than boys in their subjects;
- Their views relating to the impact of cultural aspects on academic achievement of boys;
- Their views on why boys under-participated in education;
- Their views on available learning support for boys; and
- Their views on learners' task attitudes, beliefs, hopes, and behaviours.

LITERATURE REVIEW

An analysis of the 2012 grade 10 and grade 12 Namibian examination data indicated that girls received higher grades in examinable subjects than boys across the then 13 Educational Regions (EMIS, 2012). In 2015, this was still the case when the grade 10 examination results were presented to the public (Kisting, 2015).

The 2017 EMIS statistics explained this disparity in schools by indicating that although at the beginning of the educational process there were more male than female learners enrolled in Grade 1, there were progressively more female than male learners enrolled in the system from Grades 6 to Grade 12 (see table 1). During this period, survival rates were higher for females than males, more boys dropped out of school than girls because of failing, discipline problems, going to work and because of demands from some parents that their sons leave school (EMIS, 2017).

The indices of dropping out of school, lower enrolment rates from Grades 6 to 12, lower promotion rates, lower survival rates and higher school-leaving rates speak to the situation where several Namibian boys underachieve and under-participate in primary and secondary education (see table 2).

According to Dweck (2017), it is important to enable every student to learn. To do this, teachers should believe in the *growth* of the intellect in all students, *including boys*. We

wondered if secondary school teachers in Namibia promoted intellectual growth amongst all learners.

Diprete and Buchmann (2013) suggested that to enhance boys' academic achievement, teachers should teach such students social and behaviour skills that promote achievement. They could do this by creating a socially enhanced learning environment in which students are eager to learn, willing to obey rules, eager to work in groups and willing to actively participate and be actively engaged in learning. In such a learning environment, according to Reichert and Hawley (2010), teachers should *be present* for their students. To do this, teachers should assume the role of guides, and they should not give up on any struggling students but challenge them to learn through perseverance (Gladwell, 2009). For instance, in our view, the establishment of 'boy friendly learning environments' (Sax, 2016), may provide learning spaces in which boys are welcomed, recognized, included, involved, and invited to actively participate.

In addition to establishing 'boy friendly learning environments', teachers should focus on improving the quality of education for all students. According to Martino and Kehler (2007, p.424), this amounts to teachers providing all learners with "intellectually demanding and problem-solving tasks relevant to the demands of life outside the school".

Jha and Pouzevara (2016) reported that in Seychelles, teachers' expectations that boys perform and behave less well than girls, partially accounted for lack of interest in school among boys. This was due to stereotypes in which boys were perceived to be lazy, irresponsible, and lacking in motivation. Consistent with this, Stromquist (2007) and Page and Jha (2009) obtained data from seven countries and from three different continents and concluded: "In countries where teachers do not have high expectations of boys, they tend to underachieve". We wondered what the case was like in Namibian schools.

In addition, in agreement with Jha and Pouzevara (2016), we suggest that the teacher expectation that boys require a more authoritarian control for them to be taught should be replaced with dialogue, negotiation, and understanding of boys' perspectives (Gladwell, 2013).

This should be the case because, Jha and Kelleher (2006, p.21) asserted that "teachers in the classroom have been guilty of gender stereotyping, and that low expectations of boys' behaviour and academic effectiveness contribute to the levels of boys' underachievement". We wished to find out whether these factors influenced Namibian boys' underachievement and under-participation in education.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

We used a pragmatic parallel mixed methods design. For the quantitative part, we used the survey design and for the qualitative part, we used the case study design.

Sample

We used the systematic sampling technique to collect data from 53 schools located in all 14 Educational Regions of Namibia. We collected quantitative data from 528 secondary school teachers with ages ranging from 20 to 61 years. Whereas 58.7% of the teachers were female, 39% of them were male. In addition, whereas 65.3% of the teachers taught in urban areas, 28.6% of them taught in rural areas and 4.4% of the teachers taught in

peri-urban areas. Moreover, 63.3% of the teachers held degrees, 24.2% had diplomas and 4.4% had certificates in education.

We used the criterion sampling technique to select 115 teachers who participated in focus group discussions.

Research Instruments

We used structured questionnaires, EMIS statistics and grades 10 and 12 examination results to collect quantitative data. We used interview guides and recorders to collect focus group discussions' data.

Procedure

Research instruments were piloted amongst persons who were part of the research population in rural and urban areas of the Khomas Educational Region. Researchers administered questionnaires to sampled teachers, conducted focus group discussions, and used data recorders to record proceedings of focus group discussions and interviews.

Research ethics

The study only commenced after receiving institutional ethical clearance and approval from the University of Namibia Ethics Committee and from the national, Regional, and local officials of the Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture. Informed consent was obtained from teachers at the beginning of data collection sessions after they had signed informed consent forms which certified that they had decided to participate in the study voluntarily.

Researchers informed teachers about their right to decline to participate and to withdraw from the research exercise once participation had begun. They were informed that to maintain confidentiality, their identities would not be divulged at any point during the conduct of the study and during the reporting of the research findings. Access to their responses and voice recordings was confidential as it was restricted to researchers only. Because all research activities were undertaken in a humane manner, no teacher was expected to be harmed from their participation in the study.

Data analysis

Frequencies, cross-tabulations, and inferential statistics in the form of the chi-square were used to analyse quantitative data. We used typological, content, and narrative strategies of analysing qualitative data.

RESULTS AND THEIR DISCUSSION

In this section, we present and discuss data according to the research questions we asked earlier, as follows:

Reasons why girls performed better than boys in their subjects.

When we looked at why teachers thought that girls performed better than boys, most of them agreed that girls performed better than boys because boys were not focused, because they were absent from their classes and because they were undisciplined. In contrast to this, the majority of the teachers disagreed with the statements that boys performed worse than girls because they believed that they could be employed without education, because they found the school subject matter irrelevant, because they found the school curriculum unappealing, because they were given less attention than girls by teachers, and because

they were more affected by family poverty than girls (See Table 4). We discerned two messages from these findings. Firstly, boys who underachieved in education did so because they were not interested in education and excluded themselves from academic activities. Secondly, boys who underachieved in education did not do so because they devalued education and found it unappealing but because they were not interested in it. It was not because they were ignored by teachers or because poverty prevented them from performing well in school.

These findings and our deductions are inconsistent with literature on curriculum – based and quality of education explanations of boys’ educational underachievement. It is held that boys under-achieve because they are confronted in school with curriculum content that is perceived to be either irrelevant to them or does not relate to their needs and aspirations. Moreover, they are assessed on educational material such as reading, writing and Mathematics that they perceive to be unimportant to their lives (Nicholls and Hazzard, 1993). Although teachers in our study did not think that boys who educationally underachieved held these views, the issue of ensuring that the curriculum captures boys’ interests and aspirations remains valid.

Table 4: Reasons why girls perform better than boys in specific teachers’ subjects.

| Girls perform better than boys in my subjects because boys | Responses | | | | | | | | | | | |
|--|----------------|------|-------|------|----------|------|-------------------|------|-------------|-----|-------|-----|
| | Strongly agree | | agree | | Disagree | | Strongly disagree | | No response | | Total | |
| | F | % | F | % | F | % | F | % | F | % | F | % |
| Are not focused. | 96 | 18.2 | 198 | 37.5 | 180 | 34.1 | 34 | 6.4 | 20 | 3.8 | 528 | 100 |
| Are absent from classes. | 157 | 29.7 | 234 | 44.3 | 91 | 17.2 | 18 | 3.4 | 28 | 5.3 | 528 | 100 |
| Are in-disciplined | 121 | 22.9 | 238 | 45.1 | 133 | 25.2 | 28 | 5.3 | 8 | 1.5 | 528 | 100 |
| Believe that they can be employed without education. | 27 | 5.1 | 169 | 32.0 | 262 | 49.6 | 53 | 10 | 17 | 3.2 | 528 | 100 |
| Find the subject matter irrelevant. | 42 | 8.0 | 163 | 30.9 | 252 | 47.7 | 51 | 9.7 | 20 | 3.8 | 528 | 100 |
| Find the curriculum content not appealing | 32 | 6.1 | 182 | 34.5 | 238 | 45.1 | 56 | 10.6 | 20 | 3.8 | 528 | 100 |
| Are given less attention by teachers than girls. | 26 | 4.9 | 58 | 11.0 | 230 | 43.6 | 199 | 37.7 | 15 | 2.8 | 528 | 100 |
| Are more affected by family poverty than girls. | 41 | 7.8 | 96 | 18.2 | 245 | 46.4 | 133 | 25.2 | 13 | 2.5 | 528 | 100 |

Teachers' views relating to the impact of cultural aspects on academic achievement of boys.

We discerned, that cultural aspects had little influence on boys' academic underachievement because according to most teachers, cultures in Namibia did not give boys the authority to put in minimum effort in their schoolwork, defy the authority of teachers and parents, misbehave wantonly, and believe that education had no relevance to their future roles in society. This meant to us that according to the sampled teachers, boys' academic underachievement in school was not sanctioned by these cultural suppositions.

Teachers' views on why boys under-participated in education

With respect to under-participated in education, most teachers indicated that this was the case because more boys than girls left school due to misbehaviour, did not complete their secondary education, did not participate in psychosocial development programs and they did not participate in class learning activities. This implied that some boys under-participated in education because they excluded themselves from learning activities (see Table 5).

Table 5: Teachers' views on why boys under-participated in education

| According to my experience as a teacher: | Responses | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|----------------|------|-------|------|----------|------|-------------------|-----|-------------|-----|-------|-----|
| | Strongly agree | | Agree | | Disagree | | Strongly disagree | | No response | | Total | |
| | F | % | F | % | F | % | F | % | F | % | F | % |
| More girls drop out of school than boys. | 80 | 15.2 | 216 | 40.9 | 188 | 35.6 | 35 | 6.6 | 9 | 1.7 | 528 | 100 |
| More boys leave school because of misbehaviour than girls. | 124 | 23.5 | 318 | 60.2 | 64 | 12.1 | 16 | 3.0 | 6 | 1.1 | 528 | 100 |
| More girls complete their secondary education than boys. | 141 | 26.7 | 247 | 46.8 | 111 | 21.0 | 16 | 3.0 | 13 | 2.5 | 528 | 100 |
| More girls than boys participate in psychosocial development programs (e.g., Windows of Hope; My Future is My Choice etc.). | 207 | 39.2 | 249 | 47.2 | 52 | 9.8 | 14 | 2.7 | 6 | 1.1 | 528 | 100 |
| More boys participate in sport activities than girls. | 198 | 37.5 | 251 | 47.5 | 62 | 11.7 | 11 | 2.1 | 6 | 1.1 | 528 | 100 |

| | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|--|-----|------|-----|------|-----|------|----|-----|----|-----|-----|-----|
| More girls participate in class learning activities than boys. | 144 | 27.3 | 253 | 47.9 | 113 | 21.4 | 16 | 3.0 | 2 | 0.4 | 528 | 100 |
| Boys' energy and participation are stifled by the structured nature of classrooms. | 36 | 6.8 | 182 | 34.5 | 253 | 47.9 | 45 | 8.5 | 12 | 2.3 | 528 | 100 |

Teachers' views on available learning support for boys

Most of the teachers disagreed that boys were given less psycho- social support in school than girls, that the curriculum was more feminized and thus did not appeal to boys, that teachers were more willing to support girls than boys in learning activities, and that gender policies in education were more supportive of girls' than of boys' education. In contrast to all this, the majority of the teachers agreed that boys tended to seek less academic support than girls and an overwhelming majority of them agreed that boys were more susceptible to engage in alcohol and drug abuse than girls.

From these findings it appears to us that boys were provided with as much psycho-social support in school as girls were, more boys than girls did not seek for academic support when they needed it and both boys and girls were equally supported by teachers in learning activities. This implied to us that teachers were impartial when providing learning support to boys and girls (see Table 6).

Table 6: Teachers' views on available learning support for boys

| Boys academically perform worse than girls because: | Responses | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|-----------------------|----------|--------------|----------|-----------------|----------|--------------------------|----------|--------------------|----------|--------------|----------|
| | Strongly agree | | agree | | disagree | | Strongly disagree | | No response | | Total | |
| | F | % | F | % | F | % | F | % | F | % | F | % |
| Boys are given less psycho-social support in school than girls. | 69 | 13.1 | 161 | 30.5 | 224 | 42.4 | 67 | 12.7 | 7 | 1.3 | 528 | 100 |
| Girls are given more psycho-social support in school than boys. | 91 | 17.2 | 165 | 31.3 | 209 | 39.6 | 56 | 10.6 | 7 | 1.3 | 528 | 100 |
| The fact that boys are expected to quickly "grow up" and fend for themselves stifles their self-esteem. | 49 | 9.3 | 227 | 43.0 | 205 | 38.8 | 40 | 7.6 | 7 | 1.3 | 528 | 100 |
| Boys tend to seek less academic | 103 | 19.5 | 287 | 54.4 | 112 | 21.2 | 13 | 2.5 | 13 | 2.5 | 528 | 100 |

| | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|-----|------|-----|------|-----|------|-----|------|----|-----|-----|-----|
| support than girls. | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| The curriculum is more feminized and thus does not appeal to boys. | 11 | 2.1 | 46 | 8.7 | 317 | 60.0 | 140 | 26.5 | 14 | 2.7 | 528 | 100 |
| Boys are more susceptible to engage in toxic entertainment (alcohol & drug abuse) than girls. | 250 | 47.3 | 225 | 42.6 | 41 | 7.8 | 8 | 1.5 | 4 | 0.8 | 528 | 100 |
| Teachers are more willing to support girls than boys in learning activities. | 22 | 4.2 | 68 | 12.9 | 287 | 54.4 | 142 | 26.9 | 9 | 1.7 | 528 | 100 |
| Teachers are more willing to support boys than girls in learning activities. | 8 | 1.5 | 40 | 7.6 | 339 | 64.2 | 134 | 25.4 | 7 | 1.3 | 528 | 100 |
| Gender policies in education are more supportive of girls' than of boys' education. | 72 | 13.6 | 168 | 31.8 | 202 | 38.3 | 76 | 14.4 | 10 | 1.9 | 528 | 100 |
| National policies in general are more supportive of girls' education than boys' education. | 70 | 13.3 | 151 | 28.6 | 219 | 41.5 | 79 | 15.0 | 9 | 1.7 | 528 | 100 |
| There is more economic support for needy boy-children than girl-children. | 12 | 2.3 | 64 | 12.1 | 344 | 65.2 | 99 | 18.8 | 9 | 1.7 | 528 | 100 |
| There is less economic support for needy girl-children than for needy boy-children. | 26 | 4.9 | 81 | 15.3 | 316 | 59.8 | 96 | 18.2 | 9 | 1.7 | 528 | 100 |

The teachers' view that educational policies in Namibia did not discriminate against boys, was inconsistent with our policy document analysis which showed that whereas a number of educational policies in the country highlighted girl targeted educational support interventions, they did not do so for boys in the educational system. The teachers' view that boys and girls were provided with equal economic support was inconsistent with learners' view which indicated that girl targeted support organizations provided material support and financial support to girls. We interpret the teachers' affirmation that more boys than girls engaged in toxic entertainment to mean that such entertainment did not support but undermined boys' academic achievement.

Teachers' views on learners' task attitudes, beliefs, hopes, and behaviours.

Most of the teachers agreed that boys spent less time on academic activities than girls, that girls were more collaborative on learning tasks than boys, that boys preferred to work in isolation than girls, that girls were more eager to share academic information than boys, that boys did not care about their academic achievement, and that boys were less concerned about their future. It appeared to us that some boys underachieved in education because they withdrew from learning activities, and they did not care about their own academic achievement and its impact on their future careers (see Table 7).

Table 7: Teachers' views on learners' task attitudes, beliefs, hopes and behaviours.

| Learners' task attitudes, beliefs, hopes and behaviours | Responses | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|----------------|------|-------|------|----------|------|-------------------|-----|-------------|-----|-------|-----|
| | Strongly agree | | Agree | | Disagree | | Strongly disagree | | No response | | Total | |
| | F | % | F | % | F | % | F | % | F | % | F | % |
| Boys spend less time on academic activities than girls. | 159 | 30.1 | 271 | 51.3 | 80 | 15.2 | 12 | 2.3 | 6 | 1.1 | 528 | 100 |
| Boys are more disengaged from class activities given by female teachers than girls. | 85 | 16.1 | 189 | 35.8 | 217 | 41.1 | 31 | 5.9 | 6 | 1.1 | 528 | 100 |
| Girls are more collaborative on learning tasks than boys. | 128 | 24.2 | 287 | 54.4 | 94 | 17.8 | 14 | 2.7 | 5 | 0.9 | 528 | 100 |
| Boys prefer to work in isolation than girls. | 51 | 9.7 | 240 | 45.5 | 206 | 39.0 | 23 | 4.4 | 8 | 1.5 | 528 | 100 |
| Girls are more eager to share academic information than boys. | 100 | 18.9 | 281 | 53.2 | 121 | 22.9 | 18 | 3.4 | 8 | 1.5 | 528 | 100 |
| Boys do not care about their academic achievement. | 68 | 12.9 | 226 | 42.8 | 196 | 37.1 | 31 | 5.9 | 7 | 1.3 | 528 | 100 |
| Socialization stifles the boy-child ability to express his feelings with regard to the negative | 82 | 15.5 | 275 | 52.1 | 145 | 27.5 | 17 | 3.2 | 9 | 1.7 | 528 | 100 |

| | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|----|------|-----|------|-----|------|----|-----|---|-----|-----|-----|
| consequences of his underachievement. | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Boys are less concerned about their future. | 87 | 16.5 | 239 | 45.3 | 159 | 30.1 | 39 | 7.4 | 4 | 0.8 | 528 | 100 |

When we applied chi-square comparisons on some of the teachers' data according to gender, two messages emerged. First, whereas both male and female teachers disagreed that boys who underachieved in education believed that they could be employed without education (Chi-square = 20.3; df = 8; $p < .01$), both genders agreed that more girls than boys completed secondary school education (Chi-square = 22.0; df = 8; $p < .005$).

In the second message, more female than male teachers agreed that more girls than boys participated in psychosocial development programmes (Chi-square = 16.0; df = 8; $p < .04$), more female than male teachers agreed that more girls than boys participated in class learning activities (Chi-square = 15.7; df = 8; $p < .05$), and more female than male teachers disagreed that teachers were more willing to support girls than boys in learning activities (Chi-square = 21.2; df = 8; $p < .01$).

To triangulate some of the teachers' quantitative data we discussed above, we conducted focus group discussions with 115 teachers. The focus of the discussions was on:

- the review of the national educational policies to enhance Namibian boys' academic achievement,
- the influence of boys' socialization on their underachievement in education,
- what teachers did to support the learning of boys in their classes,
- suggestions teachers made on how boys should be supported by the community in order to improve their academic achievement.

The review of the national educational policies to enhance Namibian boys' academic achievement.

When we analysed teachers' responses to this interview question, we identified four categories. These were: *boy child education targeted programmes, educational policy review to highlight boys' educational issues, in-service programme to sensitize teachers on boys' needs and parental education.* We discuss data on three of these categories.

On boys' targeted programmes we wish to highlight the educational policy review suggestions that follow. Firstly, we endorse the teachers' suggestion of establishing after school initiatives to empower, inspire and counsel boys who underachieve to work hard in school, discourage them from dropping out of school and establishing clubs and community-based projects whose main objective would be to discourage boys from activities that were irrelevant to education.

Secondly, the policy review should focus on specific initiatives targeted at boy child education. An example of such initiatives would be on a school and community-based intervention to deal with alcohol and drug abuse amongst boys and on empowering boys to manage negative effects of dysfunctional peer pressure.

Thirdly, we concurred with teachers when they indicated that awareness campaigns on boys' under-achievement could be instituted in schools and in the communities.

The influence of boys' socialization on their underachievement in education

From the teachers' focus group discussion data we wish to highlight the following three issues:

Firstly, we discuss *parents' laxity over boys' socialization that might promote their underachievement in education*. Teachers reported that parents were stricter in the socialization of girls than they were in the socialization of boys because girls were perceived to be more vulnerable than boys. Due to this, they were scolded and reprimanded by parents if they behaved the way boys did. Several parents allowed their sons freedom to 'roam around'. Our interpretation of this is that to enhance their academic achievement in school, boys should be more firmly disciplined, monitored, controlled, and guided by their parents during socialization.

Secondly, boys who underachieved in education seemed to get the message that because their parents were not strict with them, they did not expect them to succeed in school. The message seemed to be that they should not worry if they failed in school because they were men who should persevere under all circumstances and succeed- even without education (Edwards-Jauch, 2016). One implication of this was that boys who underachieved in education were not raised to succeed in school, but they were raised with the understanding that they could get jobs without education.

Thirdly, because parents were not strict with boys who underachieved in education, such boys at times joined gangs which influenced them to engage in crime, drug dealing and other anti-social behaviours. Because these actions might keep them out of school, they would under-participate in education.

With regards to *gender socialization that might promote boys' underachievement in school*, we wish to discuss issues that follow.

According to teachers, while girls learnt to be responsible through many chores assigned to them at home, boys were spared of these chores and so did not learn to be responsible. In contrast, girls learnt to multi-task from being given multiple chores to perform at home. This enabled them to learn how to manage time wisely and how to work under pressure. Our interpretation of this is that to encourage boys' academic achievement in school, they must learn how to be responsible at home by actively participating in the performance of a variety of household chores (Samuels, 2019; Obama, 2004).

Regarding *cultural expectations for boys and girls during socialization that might promote boys' underachievement in school* we discuss and highlight issues that follow.

Firstly, parents did not firmly sanction misdeeds of the boy committed inside and outside the home but came down heavily on the girl for offences similar to those committed by the boy. In one sense, boys learnt to be lazy and not to care about education. In another sense, the unrestrained freedom taught them to feel independent early, look for jobs and drop out of school. It seems some boys who underachieve in school, use their freedom of action and perceived independence to 'rush into the future' unprepared. In our view, although culturally acceptable, these habits contribute to boys' underachievement and under-participation in education and should be disrupted for the sake of gender equality.

Secondly, during socialization, girls were more shamed for their infractions than boys were for theirs. Teachers pointed out that girls, culturally, were shamed more for

infractions such as pregnancy, drinking and smoking. To avoid the shame, girls either ensured that they did not get pregnant while in school or if they got pregnant, they worked hard at school after giving birth. Some boys who underachieved in education did not seem to be ashamed of their poor performance as they did not care about doing badly in school. We interpreted this to mean that shame and disgrace as cultural sanctions against antisocial and other undesirable behaviours seemed not to be effective when applied to boys who underachieve in education as they appeared to be undeterred by these cultural tools of censure.

Pertaining to *fathers' behaviour and fathers' absence from home that might promote boys' underachievement in school*, it was reported that in the absence of fathers from home, a number of boys turned out to be undisciplined, disrespectful, lazy, and academically underachieving in school. In our view, fathers should be available, responsive, and supportive of their sons' education and ensure that they work in unison with their spouses when sanctioning their sons' wrongdoing (Samuels, 2019). In addition, teachers should take their role of 'loco parentis' seriously by being responsive role models to boys who educationally underachieve in particular.

How teachers supported the learning of boys in their classes

According to teachers, a number of barriers to learning made it very difficult for teachers to encourage boys who academically underachieved to get involved and participate in learning. Some of these were boys' unwillingness to participate in class, boys' uneagerness to ask questions when they did not understand in class and boys' uneasiness in class and in school because they seemed to be forced to come to school. In addition, some boys who underachieved seemed to be always angry, quiet, did not wish to be bothered and appeared to have given up.

Instead of giving up on such boys, we endorse the suggestion that teachers should be alert to and pay attention to boys who did not participate in learning activities. They needed to do so by providing boys with specific opportunities to participate in class. This could include giving them opportunities to take charge and lead class learning groups and by ensuring that they were not bullied/intimidated into silence by those (e.g., girls) who performed better than them. In addition, outdoor camps could be organized for the purpose of engaging boys in extra-curricular activities.

To further support the learning of boys who underachieve, sampled teachers suggested that teachers should interact with them. This interaction is important because boys opened up and participated in classes taught by teachers who were responsive to their issues and needs (Cox, 2018). Their interaction with boys should focus on building them up through academic guidance and advice. It should not focus on blame, shaming and emotional abuse-tendencies that learners reported a number of teachers applied against boys. In our view, the use of mentoring, modelling, and scaffolding also encourages boys to excel. It was reported that teachers encouraged boys to ask for help from them and from other learners when they needed to. In using scaffolding, teachers informed boys that they were not self-sufficient but needed the help of others from time to time. Because of this, they should not keep to themselves and think that they could make it in education and in life on their own. We support this position.

Suggestions teachers made on how boys should be supported by the community in order to improve their academic achievement.

Because they expect some boys who underachieve to misbehave, teachers interact with them in a hostile manner. Instead of reducing or changing the boys' apparent negative behaviour, teachers' hostile demeanour exacerbates it. In this unsupportive community context, the boys implicated underachieve (Jha and Pouezevara, 2016).

Teachers expressed several views on how *the community could support boys' education*. The first view was on the suggestion that parents should be 'real parents' not only to girls but to boys as well. Parents as members of the community should provide care, guidance, discipline, and correction to boys as they do to girls. They should realize that boys were as vulnerable as girls. Because they were unable to protect themselves, they needed care, protection, and guidance from parents as girls needed protection, care, and guidance from parents.

The second view was on the proposal that communities should change the 'pigeon-hole' type of socializing boys and girls. This implied that there should be changes in socialization conventions of what was right for girls to do and what was right for boys to do. This should be done because the disparity in the socialization of boys and girls created conditions under which boys become prone to misbehaviour, antisocial behaviour, self-destructive behaviours, and underachievement in education.

To us, all this implies that if we really want boys who underachieve in education to improve their academic achievement, communities should institute changes in beliefs and practices about how such boys are socialized and treated. As is the case with girls, boys' socialization should lead to self-controlled behaviour and a focused attitude towards life and education.

The third view was that communities should beware that boys were emotionally as weak as girls. Because of this, communities should make available to boys who underachieve in education counselling, guidance, psychosocial support, and care facilities where they could be helped, encouraged, and nurtured. Families in communities, NGOs, UN agencies and Faith-Based organizations should also provide such services and facilities to support boys who underachieve in education.

The fourth view was on community crime prevention amongst boys. Teachers made a number of suggestions under this theme. These were that the law enforcement agencies such as the Police should be involved in solving the serious community problem of alcohol and drug abuse. For instance, support from the Police in arresting drug dealers who target boys and prosecuting them was urgently needed. Boys who were targeted by drug dealers underperformed in school and emotionally struggled to make sense of what was happening to them. Such boys should be supported by the regional, city, town, and village councils.

In the fifth point, teachers suggested that campaigns should be organized in the community to sensitize people about the educational needs of boys and how families and other members of the community could support them in education. Messages, initiatives, programmes and community projects on moral education, values education, citizenship education, prosocial behaviour, beliefs, and practices could be organized around the education of the boy.

In the sixth point, teachers expressed the concern that because boys were allowed by parents to be away from home, they learnt a lot of mischief. Parents themselves were rarely at home during most of the day and night. Because of this, the home ceased to be a site of child rearing and socialization. For socialization in the community to change, parents must directly be taught how to raise boys in varied social-economic contexts.

The seventh view was that as members of their communities, fathers should act as role models who were present and available to their sons. To act as role models fathers should make time to be at home with their sons. They should not leave the job of parenting to their spouses because this led to boys growing up with the understanding that men did not stay home to look after their families. To act as examples to their sons, fathers should participate in household chores when at home. This would give their sons the opportunity of learning how to be responsible (Samuels, 2019).

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the results and their discussion, we highlight the following recommended interventions:

1. We recommend that a policy review should be undertaken to focus on specific initiatives targeted at boy child education. For example, a school and community-based intervention to deal with alcohol and drug abuse amongst boys could be instituted. Furthermore, the policy review should be done because existing gender policies in education were designed and implemented in a manner that appeared to discriminate against boys. This is so because as indicated earlier, girls are singled out for special attention in several policies while boys are not.
2. Teachers should show concern for boys who underachieve in education by treating them with understanding, fairness and by addressing their learning concerns and challenges in a responsive, warm, caring, and nurturing manner. Teachers could implement this recommendation by forming learning groups for boys and establishing boys' clubs to promote boys' education and interests.
3. We recommend that pre- and in-service teacher education programmes should sensitize and instil in teachers caring and nurturing attitudes towards boys who underachieve in education, raise awareness of gender disparity in education attainment that is in favour of girls and empower teachers to initiate programmes and attitudinal changes aimed at redressing the disparity. This should be done without undermining educational benefits that have accrued to girls over the years.
4. We strongly recommend the establishment of 'boy friendly learning environments' (Sax, 2016) in which boys are welcomed, recognized, included, involved, and invited to actively participate. To support boys' learning, teachers should, in practice, promote the functioning of such learning environments by encouraging boys to "read more, listen and attend more to teachers and to other pupils, work harder and take more pride in their work, work collaboratively and articulate themselves better in all aspects of communication" (Francis and Skelton, 2005 as cited in Martino and Kehler, 2007, p. 424).

CONCLUSION

In summary, according to the teachers, boys who underachieved in education did so because they were not interested in education and excluded themselves from academic activities. They under-participated in education because they did not take advantage of educational support opportunities made available to them in school. We conclude from these findings that the teachers ascribed some boys' underachievement and under-participation in education to their lack of motivation and their self-imposed exclusion from learning activities.

According to teachers, *parents' laxity over boys' socialization that might promote their underachievement in education* is demonstrated when parents were stricter in the socialization of girls than they were in the socialization of boys. We conclude that to enhance their academic achievement, boys should be more firmly disciplined, guided and taught what to do by their parents during socialization.

With respect to community's support of boys' education, we conclude from teachers' understanding that parents should be 'real parents' to both girls *and* boys. They should provide care, guidance, discipline, and correction to boys as they do to girls. Because they are unable to protect themselves, boys needed care, protection, and guidance from parents as girls needed protection, care, and guidance from parents.

REFERENCES

- African Union (2004). *Solemn Declaration on gender equality in Africa*: Addis Ababa: African Union
- African Union (2009). *African Union Gender Policy*. Addis Ababa: African Union
- African Union (2016). *Continental Educational Strategy for Africa, 2016-2025*. Addis Ababa: African Union
- Cox, A. J. (2018). *Cracking the boy code: How to understand and talk with boys*. Gabriola Islands, B. C. Canada: New Society Publishers.
- Diprete, T., and Buchmann, (2013). *The rise of women: The growing gender gap in education and what it means for American Schools*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation.
- Edward-Jauch L. (2016). Gender-based violence and masculinity in Namibia: A structuralist framing of the debate. *Journal of Humanities and social Sciences*. Vol. 5 Issue 1.
- Dweck, C. S. (2017). *Mindset: Changing the way you think to fulfil your potential*. London: Robinson, an Imprint of Little, Brown Book Group.
- FAWE (1992). *Forum for African Women Educationalists*. Nairobi: FAWE
- Francis, B., and Skelton, C. (2005). *Reassessing gender and achievement: Questioning contemporary key debates*. London: Routledge.
- Gladwell, M. (2014). *David and Goliath: Underdogs, misfits and the art of battling giants*. London: Penguin Books.
- Gladwell, M. (2009). *Outliers: The story of success*. London: Penguin Books.

- Jha, J. and Kelleher, F. (2006). *Boys' underachievement in education: An exploration in selected commonwealth countries*. Vancouver, British Columbia: Commonwealth Secretariat and Commonwealth of Learning.
- Jha, J., and Pouezevara, S. (2016). *Measurement and research support to education strategy goal1: Boys' underachievement in education: A review of the literature with a focus on reading in the early years*. Prepared for Office of Education, Bureau for Economic Growth, Education, and Environment (E3), (USAID).
- Kisting, D (2015). 17 000 Fail Grade 10. *The Namibian*, 17 December 2015, pp.1-2. Windhoek: The Namibian.
- Martino, W., and Kehler, M. (2007). Gender-based literacy reform: A question of challenging or recuperating gender binaries. *Canadian Journal of Education*, 30, 2: 406-431.
- Mills, M. (2003). Shaping the boys' agenda: The backlash blockbusters. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, Vol. 7, No. 1, 57-73.
- Mills, M., Martino, W., and Lingard, B. (2007). Getting boys' education 'right': The Australian Government's Parliamentary Inquiry Report as an exemplary instance of recuperative masculinity politics. *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, Vol. 28,
- Ministry of Education (2013). *Sector Policy on Inclusive Education*. Windhoek: GRN, EU and UNICEF.
- Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture (2018). *Directorate of National Examinations and Assessment: 2016-2018 Grade 10 and Grade 12 Examinations Results*. Windhoek: GRN.
- Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture (2012-2022). *Educational Management Information System (EMIS)*. Windhoek: GRN.
- Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture (2020). *Basic Education Act, 2020 (Act No. 3 of 2020)*. Windhoek: GRN.
- Ministry of Gender Equality and Child Welfare (2007). *National Integrated Early Childhood Development Policy*. Windhoek: GRN.
- Ministry of Gender Equality and Child Welfare (2015). *Childcare and Protection Act, 2015 (Act No. 3 of 2015)*. Windhoek: GRN.
- Obama, B. (2004). *Dreams from my father. A Story of Race and Inheritance*. New York: Crown Publishers.
- Page, E., and Jha, J. (2009). *Exploring the bias: Gender and stereotyping in secondary schools*. London: Commonwealth Secretariat.
- Reeves, R. V. (2022). *Of boys and men: Why the modern male is struggling, why it matters, and what to do about it*. London: Swift Press.
- Reichert, M., and Hawley, R. (2010). *Reaching Boys, Teaching Boys: Strategies That Work and Why*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- SADC (2008). *SADC Protocol on gender and development*. Gaborone: SADC.

- SADC (2013-2020). *SADC Gender Protocol Barometer*. Gaborone: SADC.
- Samuels, T. (2019). *Future man: How to evolve and thrive in the age of Trump, Mansplaining, and #METOO*. New York: Arcade Publishing.
- Sax, L. (2016). *Boys Adrift: The Five Factors Driving the Growing Epidemic of Unmotivated Boys and Underachieving Young Men; revised and updated edition*. New York: Basic Books.
- Stromquist, N. P. (2007). The gender socialisation process in schools: A cross-national comparison. Background paper prepared for the UNESCO *Educational for All Global Monitoring Report 2008: Education for All by 2015. When will we make it?* Paris: UNESCO.
- UN (1995). *Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action*. New York: UN
- UN (1996). *Report of the Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing, 4-15 September 1995*. New York: UN.
- UN (2021). *The sustainable development goals report 2021*. New York: UN
- UNESCO (2020). *A new generation: 25 years of efforts for gender equality in education*. Paris: UNESCO.
- UNESCO (2022). *Leave no child behind: Global report on boys' disengagement from education*. Paris: UNESCO.
- Weaver-Hightower, M. (2003). The "Boy Turn" in Research on Gender and Education. *Review of Educational Research*. Vol. 73, No.4, pp. 471-498.
- Welmond, M. J. and Gregory, L. (2021). *Educational Underachievement among Boys and Men*. Washington, DC.: The World Bank.
- World Bank (2008). *Girls' Education in the 21st Century: Gender Equality, Empowerment, and Economic Growth*. Washington D. C.: World Bank.
- Zimba, R. F., Kasanda, C. D., Haihambo, C. K., Kudumo, M., Kapenda, H. M., Neshila, F. K. and Sheyapo, M. (2023). *Report on Namibian Boys' underachievement in education*. Windhoek: UNAM.

Authors' biographical information

Prof. Roderick Fulata Zimba is Professor Emeritus of Educational Psychology and Research Methodology in the School of Education at the University of Namibia.

Prof. Choshi D Kasanda is formerly Professor of Mathematics Education in the School of Education at the University of Namibia.

Dr. Cynthia K. Haihambo is a senior lecturer in the Department of Applied Educational Sciences, University of Namibia.

Dr. Marius Kudumo is the Director of Corporate Engagement and International Relations at the University of Namibia and was Secretary-General of the Namibia National Commission for UNESCO.

Prof. Hileni Magano Kapenda is an Associate Professor of Mathematics and Science Education who worked at the University of Namibia for 25 years.

Dr. Kashinauuu Faustina Neshila is a lecturer of Science Education in the School of Education at the University of Namibia.

Mrs Mirjam Sheyapo is a Lecturer in the School of Education at the University of Namibia.