

Gender Analysis of Literature Set Books: A Study of Selected Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education (KCSE) Literature Texts

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Abstract

Set books are an important socializing tool and play a crucial role in determining students' worldview of gender relations in society. Gender responsiveness is one of the emerging issues that have attracted major debates in various forums including in the education system in general and choice of set books in particular. This study examined the gender responsiveness of selected KCSE literature set books, and students' and English teachers' responses to the gender issues in the set books. The study applied the ABC Gender Analysis Model and the Reader - Response theory. The ABC Gender Analysis Model measures gender responsiveness of set books and other curriculum materials while the Reader - Response theory emphasizes the reader's role in creating meaning of a text and experience of a literary work. The findings indicated that the KCSE set books all had elements of gender bias, stereotyping of character and role, unequal representation of male and female characters and use of gender insensitive language. However, the study also revealed that some writers had made attempts to make the literature set books gender responsive. In addition, students' responses revealed a great sense of gender awareness and sensitivity in regard to the gender issues raised in the set books. Finally, teachers' responses revealed that the teachers were keen and enthusiastic about gender issues in set books despite the fact that they had no formal training on how to implement the gender policy in education. The study recommends closer scrutiny of literature set books, in-house training of teachers on gender responsiveness, sensitizing students on gender responsive set books and providing checklists for identifying gender stereotypes and other relevant gender issues in set books. In addition, it also recommends the development of a more gender responsive curriculum in tandem with Kenya's developmental aspiration where men and women are viewed as partners in the development of all sectors of society.

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