



Policy Brief

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Gender Equality in Education in Indonesia

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» Gender Equality Goes Beyond Access

'Achieving gender parity in access to education is only a first step. Equal access does not guarantee equality. Achieving gender equality in education requires that there is equal opportunity for females and males, and that they are treated equally and fairly. This will in turn translate to greater equality in learning achievement and outcomes, and beyond education, equality of opportunities in the labour market and other spheres of life.'

**Nina Sardjunani, Deputy Minister for Human Resources and Cultural Affairs,
National Development Planning Agency**

In the last decade, Indonesia has come a long way in improving gender equity in education access. Indonesia is on track to meet the Millennium Development Goals for universal primary education and gender parity.

Gender parity has now been largely achieved at all levels of the education system, and there is parity in literacy rates for young people (15-24 age group).

These successes result from a combination of effective policies and sustained national investments in education that have expanded the availability of schools in rural areas and lowered the direct and opportunity costs of schooling, for example through gender neutral subsidy programs such as School Operational Funding (BOS).

However, the Government acknowledges that access alone does not equate to education outcomes and in recent years more attention has been given to quality, relevance and achievement.

Gender equality in education also encompasses girls' and boys' experiences in school, in terms of equal and fair treatment by teachers and the gender responsiveness of the curriculum, textbooks and learning materials, as well as the learning environment and education outcomes.

Achieving equality of opportunity in the learning process, learning achievement and outcomes for both boys and girls is a key challenge for the Government in Indonesia in the next decade.

» Gender Responsive Teaching & Learning Approaches

The ways that girls and boys experience teaching and learning in the classroom can be quite different, influencing their class participation, educational achievement and learning outcomes. Social and cultural values and stereotypes about gender can be inadvertently reinforced in the classroom and at school through teacher-pupil and pupil-pupil interaction.

Teaching approaches and methods used to teach, engage and assess students, may also favour boys, particularly in Indonesia where girls are often discouraged from speaking in public, expressing their opinions or questioning male authority.

Teachers can be key change agents for gender equality by encouraging boys and girls to undertake certain activities, providing a sense of direction and acting as role models.

Conversely, they can reinforce disparities in achievement by replicating societal stereotypes in the classroom and failing to provide support to girls and boys where it is needed.

Best practice in integrating gender equality into teaching and learning practices includes challenging stereotypes, including attitudes towards girls and boys aptitudes, giving equal attention to boys and girls and encouraging girls to take part in extramural activities normally reserved for boys.¹

There is a significant body of research that suggests that boys and girls learn in different ways. In particular, it has been found that, compared to boys, girls typically prefer to learn through collaboration and discussion.

While teaching methods that promote collaborative learning tend to improve the performance of all students, they have a particularly strong effect on the performance of female students in subjects like mathematics.²

The district of Sleman, in Yogyakarta province, has piloted gender mainstreaming in schools, through the development of a gender equality school model and training module which was delivered to participating school principals, selected teachers and student counsellors.

¹ OXFAM GB, 'Practising Gender Equality in Education', 2007; UNESCO, 'EFA Global Monitoring Report: Gender and Education for All – The Leap to Equality', 2004.

² Plan, 'Girls' Learning: Investigating the Classroom Practices that Promote Girls' Learning', 2013.

Training included recognising and addressing gender bias and stereotyping in the school environment, teaching process and learning materials.

The trainees from pilot schools then cascaded training they had received to colleagues. Activities included socialising learning materials to students and the school community and producing media materials, including banners, brochures and displays of each school's vision and mission.

Stakeholders reported positive impacts, including ensuring equal treatment of boys and girls, such as sharing tasks equally, and greater awareness of the importance of equality among students.

» Gender Equality in Curriculum

The role of the curriculum is critical to ensuring that boys and girls are given equal opportunities for success and advancement in schools.

Gender bias in the curriculum and teaching and learning materials are commonplace in developing and middle-income countries, strengthening gender stereotypes through gender-biased text and pictures.³

A gender analysis of text books in Indonesia undertaken in 2011 found significant gender bias⁴ as the following examples show:



Figure 1: Example of Gender Bias in Kindergarten Textbook
In this kindergarten (TK) textbook only male characters are shown.



Figure 2: Example of Gender Stereotyping in a Year 6 Science Textbook

This author uses a group of three friends, two female students and a male student. One female is portrayed as someone who constantly asks questions and makes repeated mistakes like touching a hot pan or not turning the light off at night.

The other female student is always asking questions, while the male student has the role of the competent student who always knows the right answers and explains them to his classmates.

Best practice in mainstreaming gender equality into the curriculum and teaching materials includes regular revision of these materials to include gender-sensitive approaches and gender perspectives and the establishment of specific bodies that are tasked with the elimination of gender stereotypes in textbooks and other teaching materials.⁵

» Gender Equality in Teacher Development

Best practice in teacher development for gender equality means equipping teachers with an understanding of the nature of gender inequality in classrooms, the wider school environment and society in general.

It entails ensuring that teachers have the ability to promote this understanding in classrooms and can develop strategies and practical solutions to overcome the barriers to learning that boys and girls face.⁶

Training in gender equality for teachers is most effective when it is integrated into both the pre-service and in-service training programmes.

To deliver this training, teacher training institutions and networks need adequate capacity in teaching active learning pedagogy that is applied with a gender equality perspective in both training development and in the skills and knowledge of teacher trainers delivering the material.

To date, provincial education quality assurance institutes, teacher training institutions, and local teacher professional development networks in Indonesia have not been gender mainstreamed.

However, there are examples of emerging good practice. In 2008, selected schools in Kupang district participated in a gender equality pilot project⁷ to train principals and teachers in the concept of gender equality in education and to apply gender-responsive teaching and learning in schools.

³ SADEV, 'Gender Equality in and Through Education, SADEV Report, 2010.

⁴ Iwu, D. Utomo & P. McDonald. 2011. Policy Brief No.1. Gender Depiction in Indonesian Primary and Secondary School Textbooks: Australia National University/ADSRI-ANU. Riset sebagian dibiayai oleh Bappenas.

⁵ OXFAM GB, 'Practising Gender Equality in Education', 2007.

⁶ Bagian kegiatan AIBEP yang didukung AusAid.

⁷ FAWA, 'FAWE: 15 Years of Advancing Girls' Education in Africa', 2007.

A key element of the pilot project was the development of a Gender Mainstreaming in Schools training module by participating primary, junior secondary and senior secondary teachers, principals, tutors, academics and members of the provincial Gender Working Group.

This resulted in revisions to school's vision and mission, teaching and learning materials and learning approaches to be gender responsive.

Many good practice models exist internationally. In response to a pervasive lack of gender sensitive teaching approaches across Africa, the Forum for African Women Educationalists (FAWE) developed the Gender Responsive Pedagogy (GRP) model in 2005, subsequently introduced in 13 countries.⁸

The model trains teachers to be gender aware, equipping them with the skills to understand the specific learning needs of both sexes.

It develops teaching practices that engender equal treatment and participation of boys and girls, and trains teachers in the design and use of gender-responsive teaching and learning materials, lesson plans, language in the classroom, classroom interaction, and strategies to eliminate sexual harassment. Implementation of the GRP model has led to improvement in girls' retention and performance and greater participation by girls in classroom activities.

» Gender Equality in Learning Achievement

Gender disparities in educational achievement are not inevitable. There is no inherent difference in the capabilities of girls and boys in mathematics, science and reading.

Under the right conditions boys and girls can perform equally well in these subjects.

However, results from all four Indonesia PISA assessments carried out over the last decade with 15 year old students show that males' achievement lags behind that of females in literacy skills (relevant to Bahasa Indonesia and English subjects) - a trend that is occurring globally in literacy.

A 2011 study⁹ assessment results also show that while female students had significantly higher achievements than male students in Bahasa Indonesian and English, male students outperformed female students in science.

There was no significant gender difference in achievements in mathematics.

Male and female students' and teachers' perceptions during informal interviews in junior and senior secondary schools for the ACDP study unanimously reflected the idea that boys were better at science and girls were better at Bahasa Indonesia and English.

Furthermore, stakeholders reported that neither principals nor teachers knew how to develop strategies to encourage males and females who underperformed in different subjects, to close gender gaps in learning achievement.

In choosing subject specialisms at senior secondary level and beyond, careers counselors do not encourage females to choose subjects and follow career paths which are traditionally perceived as occupying the male domain.

Because of the perceptions of counselors and gender stereotypes about females' and males' aptitude for mathematics and science at the primary and secondary school level, fewer females enrol in science and technology related courses in secondary vocational and higher education as compared to males. While gender stereotypes encourage females to pursue careers in administration, child development, education and public health, males tend to dominate in the sciences, engineering, technology and law.



Photo: PIH Kemendikbud

⁸ FAWE, 'FAWE: 15 Years of Advancing Girls' Education in Africa', 2007

⁹ AusAID, World Bank, MORA. *Quality of Education in Madrassah Study*. 2011.

Equality of external results is achieved when the status of men and women; their access to goods and resources; and their ability to contribute to, participate in, and benefit from economic, social, cultural, and political activities are equal.

This implies that career opportunities and the earnings of men and women with similar qualifications and experience are equal.

Although this dimension of equality falls outside the education system, the achievement of equality in education acts as a catalyst and contributes to the realisation of equality for males and females in other spheres of life, including the labour market and the domestic sphere.

» Conclusion

Much good practice and innovation in mainstreaming gender equality in education exists – both in Indonesia, and internationally.

However, in Indonesia, opportunities are missed because such practice remains largely localized and relatively small scale, often through limited pilot projects which seldom move to scale.

A key challenge is therefore to evaluate and disseminate good practice – and to prioritise resources and budgets to scale up initiatives that will make a difference.

The ACDP study found that whilst there is general support for gender issues at central level, there is currently a lack of clear strategic direction for gender mainstreaming in education, and limited specialist technical capacity.

Renewed efforts are required to mainstream gender awareness in key education policy and planning institutions - and momentum must be maintained by constantly regenerating skills and knowledge.

ACDP

The Government of Indonesia (represented by the Ministry of Education and Culture, the Ministry of Religious Affairs, and the Ministry of National Development Planning / Bappenas), the Government of Australia, through **Australian Aid**, the **European Union (EU)**, and the **Asian Development Bank (ADB)** have established the Education Sector **Analytical and Capacity Development Partnership (ACDP)**. ACDP is a facility to promote policy dialogue and facilitate institutional and organizational reform to underpin policy implementation and to help reduce disparities in education performance. The facility is an integral part of the **Education Sector Support Program (ESSP)**. EU's support to the ESSP also includes a sector budget support along with a Basic Education Minimum Service Standards capacity development program. Australia's support is through Australia's Education Partnership with Indonesia. This Policy Brief has been prepared with grant support provided by AusAid and the EU, through ACDP.

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