

## ABSTRACT

### Towards Gender Equity in Selected Jamaican Classrooms: The Development and Implementation of an Intervention

Sandra Verona Annakie

An action research approach was used to develop and implement a module of strategies and techniques to enhance gender equity in a sample of secondary level classrooms of Jamaican students. It also explored the reactions of students and the sustainability of these practices.

This study was conducted at three grade levels of an upgraded high school and it embraces the qualitative research paradigm which allowed me to interact with three secondary school teachers, and for us to learn from each other and understand our varying perspectives. Using a phenomenological case study research design over a period of two years, the group was involved in developing a module to promote gender equity in the classroom and the exchange of opinions, approaches and feelings on this issue resulted in a module which was implemented while the process involved created a strong emotional bond among members of the group. I collected thick rich data by exploring the essence of the participants' lived experiences, and by seeking a shared understanding of their feelings, their beliefs, and the meaning they acquired as they went through the process using a constructivist approach *to* curriculum building. I collected, compiled, and analysed data from observations, reflective journals, and conversational interviews. Data are presented using a thematic approach. Themes include *a sense of family, collegial support and mentorship, heightened awareness and understanding of self, and a new professional outlook.*

Results indicate that the teachers not only learned a great deal about gender and gender equity but also experienced enhanced levels of self-awareness, self and other acceptance, and mixed emotions. Self-awareness was empowering because it allowed for reflection and recognition of where their performance problems were, and indicated what could be done to improve this performance; this allowed them to exploit their strengths and cope with their weaknesses. Successes with changing their own behaviours and creating a learning environment that promoted gender equity and ensuring that students benefitted optimally from this innovative approach, took time, effort and sensitivity and was influenced strongly by the teachers' own nature, the realities of the classroom, the nature of the subject curriculum, and other elements of life. A dramatic change

was observed among the teachers such as shifts in orientation, beliefs, and in practice and it is anticipated that such change can be sustained when teachers become deep reflective practitioners who are given continued support by caring colleagues, mentors, students, and their parents.

Keywords: Sandra Verona Annakie, gender, gender equity, phenomenological case study, self-awareness

