The Struggle for a Gender Focus: Negotiated Meanings in Global Education Institutions

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Who are the key global players?

The EFA movement

- UN agencies: UNESCO, UNICEF, UNGEI

- Civil Society: Global Campaign for Education and INGOs (plus regional networks)

- Bi-lateral donors

- The World Bank/Fast Track Initiative

Gender (and Development)

- UN agencies esp UNIFEM

- Civil Society:Women's networks and organisations, some INGOs

- Some Bi-lateral donors

The research

- Document analysis
- In-depth, semi-structured interviews

"…what you have done - I have also been reflecting on these issues too. I was like, "I don't know how I am going to answer these questions" but [the interview] has really helped me reflect"

Meanings of gender

- ## As a noun

  "To me I think the big challenge that remains for us is the access issue."

- ## As a noun and an adjective

  "the crucial gender issues have been about power… "I would not look at access only… Girls are being enrolled in schools and… they drop out quickly… not because they lack interest… but because the school environment is not conducive. There are issues about sexual violence"

- ## As a verb

  "It's the actual fact of the power imbalance between males and females and how that is perpetuated in both personal spaces and institutional spaces and then reinforced through legislation, tradition, cultural roles."

- ## Boys

Gender, education and poverty linkages

- Schooling = gender equality and poverty reduction

  "you would rarely see an educated women who is not doing economically well."

- Reproduction or transformation of inequality

  "The school should be a space that is stimulating and empowering for girls and in most cases its not."

- Gender at the centre

  "it is very difficult to see effective action at eradicating poverty, without actually dealing with gender issues in a fairly systematic way"

Global frameworks: The MDGs

- Limited but useful

    "its pretty clear, it's a desirable goal, its what we all want"

- Concern with implementation and failure

- Framing of goals inherently problematic

    "The MDG narrowly focuses on this sort of parity question which is quite limiting and leads to quite… instrumentalist interventions rather than

    things that are committed to a transformation"

Institutionalising gender

- Following the frameworks

  "The legislation forms a framework that can push us… in terms of advocacy whether internal or external, they are very useful"

- Following the competition

  "because XXXX, it's because they are seen as competitors essentially. And that kind of reflects the kind of business focus that I think XXXX and other agencies, yeah, it is a very very competitive environment"

- Focusing on rights

- Dealing with resistance
- Top down or bottom up?