EDUCATING YOUNG CITIZENS: SOCIAL DISCRIMINATION, GENDER EQUALITY AND GLOBAL DEMOCRATIC ISSUES

> No-one is born a good citizen: no nation is born a democracy.   Rather, both are processes that continue to evolve over a life- time. Young people must be included from birth. A society that cuts off from its youth severs its lifeline.
> (Kofi Annan 1998: quoted in WBR 2007:183)

A society that cuts off its female youth severs its lifeline. The initial focus of this paper is on women's education. I am delighted to be able to focus on this topic today in light of the conference theme because for the last 28 years I have been thinking about the ways in which the theme of female education - the education of girls and women - relates to that of democracy. The conclusion I have come to is that we are best served as women by moving the debate about our education into the mainstream –talking about gender equality within discussions of democratic citizenship. The struggle for women's empowerment through education, our fight for equal citizenship over the last one to two hundred years is a struggle for the right to be equal citizens to men, to have the same entitlements from the state, and to be valued, respected, and recognised for the different nature of our experiences and to be able to voice our own concerns within the public domain. In other words we have fought to come out of what one American theorist described as the 'ontological basement of politics' (Roland Martin 1994 quoted in Arnot 2009: 250) in which women were not assumed to have any political relevance or agency.

Instead of being seen as second class citizens, or even if migrant as 'non-citizens', women have fought to take part in economic, cultural, political decision-making, to take our place in the history of a nation, to be recognised, on the one hand, for our ability to as active agents of change creating our own political movements and different forms of political organisations, networking and alliances and, on the other hand, for our contribution to civil society in the private sphere of the home as mothers, wives, and daughters, and as domestic educators and carers. The tiniest 'acts of citizenship'(Saigal, 2008) arguably can be found in women's lives in the privacy of their homes, even in the most traditional of societies. We have fought to have our contribution to civil society and the polity recognised in what is typically seen as a male public sphere, and to include and validate within the definition of citizenship our contribution in what is typically seen as a female private sphere.   Women are political actors in both spheres even if we have a different relationship from men to those spheres. Democratic education therefore means granting women the recognition they deserve for all these civic contributions.

Women's struggle for citizenship internationally is now widely recognised by historians as one of the great social movements for liberation of the 20th century. Our struggle has become iconic of contemporary struggles for individual autonomy and capability by, for example, Heater (1990) in his study of the citizenship as a civic ideal in world history, by Ulrich Beck in *Risk Society*

(2002) and by Amartyn Sen (1999) in *Development as Freedom*. Many now argue that what the women's movement has led to is a shift in the conceptualisations of citizenship. Now these struggles have also spread through the work of international women's organisations (Stromquist 2008), through international NGOs and through the promotion more recently of gender equality targets by international agencies such as the United Nations and UNESCO. Raised gender expectations are associated with the increasing economic strength of women in the professions and in entrepreneurialism in many countries. Economic globalisation, however, is also associated with the increasing the feminisation of poverty – with sharp rises in female poverty particularly amongst single heads of families, global violations of female sexuality and sexual trafficking and with the migrantisation of women from developing to developed economies as cheap (often domestic) labour. In this complex and difficult political terrain we can find the concepts of gender parity and gender equality built into Millennium Development Goals of quality education for all (UNESCO 2003), legitimating the claims, post Beijing, that women's rights are indeed part and parcel of the promotion of human rights in the 21st century.

Yet despite the exceptional nature of women's struggle for the rights of full citizenship within national democratic structures, it is significant that our struggle for education has been so extraordinarily difficult. Any explanation of the obstacles to female advancement through education and access to knowledge must go back, we now know, to search for the construction of male and female citizenship within political and religious philosophy. In Western Europe, the consequences of the exclusion of women from the notion of the polity was embedded in Graeco Roman classical thought which divided the world into male public spheres from which women, children and slaves were mainly excluded. These constructions of the polity were added to by Western European male philosophers who went further by adding to this political division gendered distinctions between science and nature, objectivity and subjectivity, reason and emotion with the former associated with superior male values and strengths and the latter in each case with inferior female instincts, values and minds (c.f. Arnot 2009). We now know from the work of female political thinkers that these distinctions, on which most Western European educational systems were founded, not only essentialised and naturalised gender differences, but were also legitimated, and reproduced by state education institutions. Thus when mass schooling was given the task of educating young citizens for the nation, young men and women were offered roles and forms of knowledge appropriate for the different spheres. Educational institutions such as those found in English educational systems and those which shaped its colonial legacy worked with, rather than challenged, highly gendered constructions of citizenship. Ruth Lister (1997: 69) summarised the characteristics of English male and female citizenship thus:

Table 1: Male and female citizenship characteristics

Public, male, citizen	Private, female, non-citizen
Abstract, disembodied, mind	Particular, embodied, rooted in nature

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Rational, able to apply dispassionate reason and standards of justice	Emotional, irrational, subject to desire and passion; unable to apply standards of justice
Impartial, concerned with Pubic interest	Partial, preoccupied with private, domestic concerns
Independent, active, heroic and strong	Dependent, passive, weak
Upholding the realm of freedom, of the human	Maintaining the realm of necessity of the natural and repetitious.

(Lister, 1997: 69)

The institutionalisation of male and female citizenship was to be found in the strong curriculum tracking that veered girls away from the sciences and towards the arts, humanities and the language related and domestic subjects. Boys were encouraged to develop skills and knowledge in science and in technical-vocational courses, but were also encouraged at the higher levels to contribute to the public world of the arts and humanities. Key to the process of learning a gendered citizenship was social class differentiation –what was thought to be the maximum available for the young elite was massively different from that assumed to be the minimum level of schooling for young poor, working class or immigrant groups. British education historically has been strongly differentiated by social class, and by race/ethnicity. As we know, these hierarchical principles became a major international legacy, leaving a residue of second class education for girls but especially girls living in rural and urban poverty in many postcolonial societies.

New global citizenship agendas : youth citizenship

Nonwithstanding the importance of women's struggle internationally to achieve citizenship within liberal democracies, there is also now an important emergent development agenda which again points to the significance of gender, this time for development and poverty alleviation. The new agenda focuses on the notion of 'youth citizenship' – the importance of engaging politically with young people's experience of the various transitions to adulthood and their achievement of full civic engagement within neo-liberal laissez faire economies. This emergent agenda is controversial not least because of its provenance in World Bank (externalist) discourse keen to promote faster globalisation and greater individualisation. However, the fact that this new agenda expects us to consider in more critical detail the different and similar experiences of young men and young women (e.g. between the age of 16 and 25) in making the transition to adulthood provides an important political space for those concerned with gender equality. I want to highlight here some contemporary challenges to our thinking about female education and by implication male education and the significance of this debate for reviewing and reworking notions of what constitutes democratic and secular education.

All too often in discussions about democratic education, young people's views or even their voices are neither elicited or heard within policy-making circles since young people (particularly

the poor and marginalised) tend to be characterised more as 'the problem' rather than as potential contributors to the solution to the problem of social inequality and instability. However there has been a turn in recent thinking about the role of youth within globalised societies. It is not insignificant that it is now seen as axiomatic that economic development and the eradication of poverty cannot be achieved without thinking about youth citizenship. (WBR 2007). Attention is now drawn to the fact that young people are precisely the group that have the least access to the political, economic and social rights of citizenship. They tend to have the highest unemployment rates, experience high rates of violence and abuse, have to contend without much social support in raising young families, confront major health issues such as HIV/AIDS, and have little chance to represent themselves within political structures. The World Bank Report (2007) *Development and the Next Generation* describes how there is now a 'demographic window of opportunity' in which it is possible to make a difference to the education and inclusion of young people. There is a record 1.3 billion youth between 12 and 24 in the world, with around 60% (if not more in some countries) of the South Asian and Sub-Saharan African population under 25. Young people make up half the world's unemployed, some 130 million cannot read or write and some 100 million new jobs are needed to cope with young people seeking work. There is a chance and indeed a vital need to make a difference to these young people's engagement in society if sustainable development is to be an option.

From a neo-liberal perspective, the aim is now to create young citizens who can improve market performance: in this scenario, youth as stakeholders can protest against officials who are not accountable or challenge a service that is inefficient. Young people therefore are represented as carrying the flag of economic development, good governance, and democratic process. Schools, in the future, will be judged on how far young people feel that they have a shared identity, and that they have rights, responsibilities and a duty to provide some service to society.

It is probably fair to say that for most countries, these political and economic goals are not ones normally associated with girls. It is unclear whether young women are ever perceived to be stakeholders in society, especially if their duty is defined to be one primarily of service to their families and their men folk. Without power, the notion of a stakeholder and the ideology of free choice which goes with it becomes meaningless; without access to policy- making and positions of leadership and authority, women particularly those living in poverty are unable to exercise as Naila Kabeer (1999) argued, their power to fulfil their potential, address their concerns, and create that which they value. As Mukhopadhyay (2003) shows, new transformative (rather than integrative) strategies are required to encourage women as citizens to engage with 'good governance' in order to improve their position in society – strategies that go as far as advocating changing in inheritance practices and land ownership.

Unleashing female political and economic power within a model of consumer citizenship is one reason why education for girls is so important. Is governments do adopt the model of globalisation promoted by the World Bank, then they would need to immediately to address young women's low income earning capacities and consider how best educational institutions such as schools can enhance that female capacity over and above the horizontal and vertical segregations of the labour market, male and female differential wages, and the exploitation of female workers in paid and unpaid employment. Governments would need to think much more radically about addressing gender inequities in the labour market – with far more effective

interventions into industry to promote gender equality amongst young workers, and to equalise more effectively female chances of achieving economic independence. However, we already know that schooling, on its own, cannot create the conditions for full female stakeholder status since it lies well under the 'long shadow of work' of advanced capitalist economies. Paradoxically, although modern young women are often represented as the iconic neo-liberal subjects within globalised economies, especially in those countries where most girls perform well or even better than the average boy at school (or where they flood universities as undergraduates), the conditions of their economic emancipation from patriarchal economies are not necessarily in place. Those young women today who express the language of autonomy and mobility are said to have precisely the communication skills, the flexibility required by global economies. Whilst it is clear that they have learnt the discourses of an individualised citizenship (Arnot 2009), it is not necessarily true that schools are monitored and encouraged to develop young women as full economic and political citizens (ibid).

If governments were to take up the concept of 'youth citizenship', attention would need to focused on the different relationship of young women and men to civic duties, rights and responsibilities and their opportunities to act as true participatory stakeholders within a polity. On the model of youth citizenship currently being proposed, schools would need to convince inspectors of their abilities to provide girls not just with access, not only with quality schooling, but also with the opportunities necessary to encourage an active participatory citizenship whilst at school, to develop their capabilities, and to encourage the recognition of the importance of female youth identity by those who count. Women would also need to be given second chances to broaden their horizons. Democratic education for young women therefore lies in a much deeper transformation of gender relations which goes much further than the closing of gender gaps in education.

The relational world of gender

Educating young women directly for such active citizenship, making democracies work for them, is only the tip of the iceberg. Below the surface is a very solid immovable matter of *gender relations* of which female education is part. As I argued earlier, what is at stake in female education is the gendered definition of citizenship which shapes society understanding of itself and its social order. Gender relations are what is at stake in educating girls into active citizenship in the public sphere – gender relations in the world of work, but also gender relations that are build into societal cultures, norms, traditions, customs, philosophies and religions. Any reassessment of schooling needs to take on board the often ignored fact that female education is part and parcel of what Carol Gilligan (1982) called 'the relational world' – in this case the relational world of gender.

The new international agenda around the Millennium Development Goals which uses new measures of gender gaps, international targets for gender parity and gender equality, new gender monitoring and audits is in danger of instrumentalising (creating a mechanistic model) of the education of women – female education becomes one of access and participation only without any reference to the gender cultures of schools and higher level institutions (Manjrekar, 2003). The analysis of girls' education often tends to be limited internationally to identifying and removing the obstacles to closing access gender gaps in order to achieve proven effects such as

reducing fertility, improving female and child health and potentially increasing family income levels. These are important benefits of female education. But it begs the question, what would it mean for schooling if we took the concept of gender equality as a constitutional right as a given – and if *substantive* not just *formal* equality was the goal (Sinha, 2003)

The implications for schools of taking formal constitutional commitments to gender equality at their word would be that every aspect of current educational systems would not need reviewing, reforming, and most likely, transforming. Since gender is embedded in forms of knowledge, pedagogic discourses, pedagogic styles, forms of teacher authority, models of assessment, by calling for gender equality, as part of democratic and secular education, we are calling in effect for a substantial transformation of the social relationships condoned and reproduced through schooling. Any discussion of women's education in the context of democracy is fundamentally a discussion about the democratising of gender relations in society; this does **not** mean extracting women from gender relations, but rather transforming them in ways that promote gender equality – to make substantive the formal equal citizenship promised by so many national constitutions.

Not surprisingly there is considerable resistance to such a radical reform strategy. Seeing female education as part of a gendered relational world, in effect, questions patriarchy and male power. Carol Pateman (1989) argues that underlying the social contract in society is a sexual contract – the right of men to control women. The social contract is in effect 'a fraternal pact' between the brotherhood of man. For women to claim their rights within a mature democracy, that sexual contract would need to be broken. As Raewyn Connell a leading gender theorist commented:

> It is clear that globally, men have a lot to lose from pursuing gender equality because men, collectively, continue to receive a patriarchal dividend. (Connell 2003:1808)

That transformation of gender relations can take many forms. Schools may or may not wish to take upon themselves the mantle of this transformative action – however, I am one of those who believe that schools as key regulative institutions within unequal societies should become more rather than less socially transformative especially at times when the very welfare of communities are at stake. The difficulty comes in knowing not why but *how* to address gender difference in schools.

EDUCATING FOR AND AGAINST GENDER DIFFERENCE

Schools, not just families and communities, play a significant role in shaping gender identities. Traditional heterosexual identities confirm the importance of the 'normal family' for the exercise of social stability and for successful version of state citizenship. Although in Western liberal democracies, citizenship is described as that which shapes the relationship between the individual and the state (precisely outside the private domain), increasingly what happens in the private domain is seen to be relevant to both the control of citizenry and also its functioning. The state depends on young people positioning themselves within normative models of gender and family relations. It depends heavily on families to transmit at least core social values which ensure the regulation of their children; it relies increasingly on family pedagogic work in

advance and alongside children's schooling and it assumes but often does little to support, the caring 'love-labour' that family members do in maintaining those who are infants, aged, disabled or ill (Lynch et al., 2009 in press; Lynch et al, 2007).

Whilst the state may not approve of modes of mothering that are not up to the levels required for professionalised middle class parenting, or absent fathering which leaves young people stranded without male forms of support and authority, the state rarely prepares teachers to challenge the models of gender that are found in communities. The fact is that it is often assumed in liberal democracies that teachers will 'convert' young people away from collective social identities by employing highly individualised and degendered models of learning and abstract notions of citizenship that apply across family traditions, religious and ethnic diversity and social class cultures. As a result, the state education system gets into considerable difficulty when young people use subordinated or emergent non-hegemonic models of masculinity and femininity to challenge school goals. Nor can it cope easily with the diversities of sexuality, with the range of social behaviour, ethnic/cultural and religious practices found in pluralist contemporary society. The challenge for teachers therefore is what to do about such diversity.

Diverse gender identities create one such set of policy dilemma for those concerned about social justice. Nancy Fraser (1997) differentiated between the *economic* dilemmas of redistribution which seeks to close the gender gaps (degendering education) in terms of access, with the *cultural* dilemma of how to recognise, or even celebrate gender difference. In the UK for example, we have seen shifts from policies focused gender blind policies that discriminate in favour of men, to degendering strategies which seek to remove such hidden forms of gender discrimination, to a recognition of gender differences particularly in relation to male and female learning styles, and male and female abilities to excel in different modes of pedagogy and assessment (Arnot et al.,1999).

In the UK, we are also now aware that different pedagogies create different types of gender relations. For example, new types of learner citizens associated with globalisation are meant to take control over their own learning, be able to communicate effectively with teachers about such learning, assess and reflect on their own potential and work, set their own learning targets etc. Professional middle class students excel at this seemingly gender neutral model, especially professional middle class girls who are able to put aside their traditional concept of femininity in order to adopt the mantle of the individualised high achiever. At the other extreme, the working class boy who never seems to get anything right, who is deeply vulnerable, turns to strong male friendships and bonds to cope with the breakdown of communication between him and his teachers. In fact the more the school fails to engage young people, the greater the failure of communication between teacher and taught, the more likely it is that traditional strongly differentiated gender identities from the community are brought into the school by young people hoping to bolster their confidence and their sense of self. In other worlds, paradoxically, the greater the freedom of choice or of talk in schools, the more likely it is that traditional masculinities and femininities enter the classroom and shape choices and values. Whilst teachers have appeared willing to challenge femininities that are antithetical to school progress, there is often a reluctance to engage critically with traditional masculinities other than through physical punishment and disciplinary action. As a result, in the current climate where the moves towards

individualised learning is gaining pace, greater not less differences between male and female gender identities become apparent (Arnot and Reay, 2006).

Male students experience a strong youth culture amongst their friends which offer hegemonic, subordinated and emergent models of masculinity (Connell 1987). These students experience the performance and displays of masculinity that can be an effective counter- balance to the hierarchical model of schooling especially in the context of school bullying, violence or lack of academic success. What we learnt from studies of working class boys in the UK is how potent are the notions of white macho masculinity, and how sexual prowess is associated with black working class masculinities when resisting notions that they were school failures. Such strong masculinities give young men something they value over and above schooling.

These forms of masculinity and male culture takes clearly play an enormous part in the shaping of women's lives. It is not just family culture that influences and limits female education but the education in what it means to become a man, and how such concepts are used by young men to oppress and/or bully young women within and outside the walls of the school. Achieving democratic education therefore involves *transforming notions of masculinity* as much as it does modernising femininity.   This fact has been taken into account by the United Nations which set up an expert group to try and find ways of involving men in the promotion of gender equality and female citizenship (Breines et al., 2000). The group found that gender equality required men to reconsider masculinity and its uses. That boys should be encouraged to disassociate themselves from the most negative violent aspects of their gender, that they should find ways of 'disconnecting courage from violence, steadfastness from prejudice, and ambition from exploitation' (Connell, 2000:30). Projects on masculinity in schools in the UK ask boys to explore critically men's role in the family, as fathers, husbands and sons, the expectations that men should be the main breadwinner, the assumptions about men's superiority over women, and the representations and performance of dominant forms of male heterosexuality. Such initiatives involve asking boys themselves to, for example, investigate the history of masculinity, the association of masculinity with nationhood, war and peace, the anxieties that dominant (hegemonic) forms of masculinity creates in boys and the strategies that boys and men use to address those anxieties.

Addressing traditional forms of masculinity therefore is important for boys' achievement, for women, and essential for the promotion of gender equality and women's education (Connell, 2003). We can go further and argue that it is also essential for the development of global peace. The relationship between men and violence, and men and war is increasingly recognised as a critical element of peace education today. For those concerned about global security and sustainable development, it is now recognised as essential that school projects engage with both sexes on thinking through how men and women relate to violence, and the extent of male violence against men, women and children. Democratic education as a goal goes far deeper than just talking superficially about empowering women, it is about empowering men to challenge gender constructions and the use of male violence within society and globally.

The task of establishing gender equality through schooling becomes even more complex when we consider gender relations within ethnically diverse and economically unequal societies. Celebrating this multitude of gender identities, their specificity and diversity *within* each gender

category raises enormous dilemmas not least in challenging the universality and communality implied by abstract notions of democratic citizenship. At what level should democratic educators engage with difference? – a question that Western European democracies have failed to answer in a satisfactory manner. Gender difference is often understood in traditional religious cultures negatively with women treated as inferior to men in many respects not least intellectually. 'When men and women are treated differently, the man remains the norm against which the woman is peculiar, lacking, different' (Phillips 2005:45 quoted in Lister,1997). Consequently women's access to their rights as citizens is denied. Equal citizenship implies not judging women against the male norm, nor encouraging them only become like men. It involves recognition of female virtues, values, identities and worlds - it involves exploring the value of women's own relational worlds, their strength in caring citizenship, and citizenship activities in the community (what is known as the 'third space' – the space between public and private spheres). Making equal citizenship substantive therefore implies recognising the differences *between* women, and *between* men as a result of the range of social cleavages such as those of social class, ethnicity, religion, 'race' and sexuality.

Susan Moller Okin's (1999) attempt to tackle the contradictions of valuing gender equality, as well as a secular form of multiculturalism in her controversial book *Is Multiculturalism Bad for Wome*n? is particularly controversial. Okin argues that gender equality and multiculturalism are not easily compatible not least because the latter can easily lead to greater rather than less inequality between men and women. Countries with the strongest patriarchal traditions are often those with the largest gap between male and female literacy. A democratic redistributive strategy would encourage girls through education to transition *out* of their cultures of origin in the name of individual rights and freedom. This sort of multiculturalism would encourage the notion of equal rights for women within diverse ethnic and religious cultures by offering women what Okin calls 'realistic rights to exit' so as to become 'mistresses of their destiny'.

There are dangers with this position in that it judges the claims of different cultural groups in terms of pre-ordained notions of universal rights, or monolithic notions of culture that takes for granted forms of male dominance (Phillips, 2002). Instead it might be better to use yardsticks such has *harm, equality* and *choice* to distinguish between the gender impact of different group practices and cultures. Alternatively, the concept of *female capability* could represent a better yardstick when considering whether religions and ethnic cultures realistically offer the opportunity for young women (and young men) the means to achieve their potential, and any realistic level of autonomy, empowerment and personal agency.

Socially progressive pedagogies in schools cannot easily resolve these problems about the politics of difference within and across gender categories of men and women. What is clear is that the language of citizenship rights is not sufficient to ensure gender equality in a complex pluralist society. What is needed is an active engagement with the concerns about social solidarity, cohesion, belonging, and the need to rethink the notion of difference. There also needs to be anawareness that both minority and majority communities are not static but forever changing and adapting to social change.

Globalisation and individualisation: a new gendered generation

Finally the challenge for school systems today is to encourage gender equality within the fast changing cultural and economic context of globalisation - conditions which Bauman (2001), a leading Polish social theorist, called 'global liquid modernity'. The new generation of youth in advanced industrial societies are encouraged not to think about 'being male' or 'being female'. Arguably these identities are far less relevant in a world where there is increasing fluidity, movement and fragmentation. In the new social order of the 21st century, young people are encouraged, it is said, to uncouple themselves from local, regional, class, caste, race, gender and sexual identifications in order to be free to make new alliances, to move away from their home, community or country, and to take up opportunities when and where they occur. Ulrich Beck and Elizabeth Beck Gernsheim (2002), the internationally recognised German sociologist, called this new generation, 'Freedom's children' since they are likely to be mobile, flexible in ambition and have internalised the message of free choice in their personal lives – seemingly in line with neo-liberal political agendas. These are youth who are able to make their lives their own project – to use choice rather than normative biographies – to describe their own life plans and paths, to speak the language of reflexive individualisation – even if they never achieve such freedoms (Arnot 2009).

In this context, gender equality within democratic and secular education has other connotations. Urbane young women, especially those called the 'CAN DO' girls who are often in the professional middle classes, speak the language of individualisation as a result of their schooling. They appear therefore to be well adjusted at least in their approach to postmodern conditions and well prepared for global impacts on life style. However it is unclear how and whether they will be able to sustain such an approach, and to cope with family life if traditional masculinities are sustained. Social change of the sort implied by globalising economies have had uneven differential impact on young men and women and well generate a much more conflictual sexual contract between men and women (or even a broken social contract) unless adequately addressed by schools (see Lukose (2005) for a study consumer citizenship and the effects of the new gender spaces created by the global media on Kerala girls). .

Aggressive assertion to traditional gender identities such as traditional religious based masculinities may come to represent the only means of coping with rapid social change in societies where young men or young women feel that they are losing out especially if they are poor, marginalised or unsuccessful within education. Young men struggle to define their place in a context where their traditional models of power are being challenged. The perceived 'modernisation of gender' therefore as something that is personally threatening. Boys in Western Europe and America have been found to resist the social transformation of gender relations and in particular modern female aspirations of achieving anything more than formal equality by promoting an aggressive machismo. Some turn to extreme political groups, drug cultures or street violence. The use of traditional models of masculinity then hold back these boys who, in so many countries, are found to be failing at school, to 'underachieve' rather than achieve.

Schools have a duty I want to argue to *prepare* young people for social change, not just for the social order. Addressing gender identities is therefore not just a girls' issue, it is not just an issue of gender equality. Increasingly it is about trying to include marginal young women and men in appropriate ways given their different social experiences, within the social fabric of society at a

time when their security in traditional livelihoods, in traditional family structures and in rural communities is threatened. Mass urbanisation, growing inequalities between rich and poor, and growing political pressures that could 'find expression in identity politics and divide society along caste and religious lines' (Kamat, 2007: 94) make gender identities part and parcel of the inequalities of social change not just social order. In this context, gender equality as a political goal which works constructively with male and female culturally shaped gender identities ((not all of which are the responsibility of the colonial heritage (Sinha 2003)) is an important and arguably an essential educational strategy for coping with such change (Mukhopadyay 2003; Sinha, 2003).

Conclusion.

I started by arguing that empowering women represents a considerable challenge for our educational systems. The time is ripe for such reform that is premised on ensuring that girls have equal access to the school system and the forms of knowledge essential to individual advancement in the fast changing economy. However although as I have argued, it is a necessary goal it is not sufficient for realising gender equality. Gender equality is about engaging with gender relations, the relational worlds of gender and the ways in which not just dominant forms of masculinity and femininity lock together but also how subordinated and often quite aggressive counter cultural masculinities and femininities constraint young people's ability to respond positively to the opportunities presented by their schooling and social change. Gender identities, we are now aware, lie at the core of social progress and social justice.

The transformation of gender relations in a society can be effected successfully by drawing insights from the work of gender theorists over the last thirty years. There is no point reinventing the wheel; it is important thought to contextualise and recognise national and cultural differences and to work up specific models of reform for each national/regional setting. Gender researchers' experience internationally is now extensive. We have learnt how to ride the tide of government reforms; we have learnt how to work with every political discourse, seize every moment, looked for every space within which to act. What we have learnt from many decades of research, teaching and policy making is that the new political and economic scenarios of the early 21st century poses a particularly important new problem for gender reformers - the transformation of gender relations on which successful education for gender equality depends.

The increasing gaps between the rich and poor, between dual income families and those with no income, between those who are schooled and those not, makes this decade, this 'window of opportunity' a time in which gender educational reform is not a luxury but essential. Youth citizenship is about creating politically aware and active young stakeholders who have an investment in the future and a strong identification with collective values and communities. The first step for young women and for those living in poverty (i.e. excluded groups) is to become aware that they have 'a right to have rights' (Beck 2000).   The second step is to recognise the forces that create their exclusion. In this case there is every reason to develop policies and successful practices that can address patriarchal, gerontocratic, ethnic, caste and social class hierarchies and subordination (Longwe, 1998) and cultural/religious discriminatory practices that breach the convention of human rights (Sinha, 2003). There is also every reason to assume that it

is only by addressing such hierarchies that the constitutional claims of equal citizenship in modern societies can be fulfilled.

Teachers have a critical but not exclusive role to play in this process of cultural transformation. Their position is often deeply compromised by centralised state control and low social status. Under conditions of globalisation they are often allowed less rather than more freedom, and the forms of regulation become even tighter. Nevertheless even without major financial investment teachers' status can be raised by encouraging them to become effective 'insider reformers' of schooling and catalysts for community engagement in gender equality. The interface here between gender activists normally found within NGOs and academia and the teaching profession is key to achieving this goal (Sen 2006). Young people themselves also need to play their part in creating democratic educational systems. They are more likely to understand global change through their access to global media cultures and the world-wide web. Their voices are a vital element in the framing of a critical, participatory model of youth citizenship which in the long run can work through cultural relations of power that underly their particular forms of exclusion. The challenge of the 21st century is to find a way of educating both young women and young men to find their own voice, agency, choice and empowerment. These ambitions imply that the modernising of gender relations of shifting both the social and the sexual contract between men and women is essential to any notion of *democratic, inclusive and equal citizenship.*

Acknowledgement.

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