

Quality education is the key to sustainable development and encompasses several dimensions including the gender perspective. Females have been left behind in the development process which creates a gender gap. Studies show that empowering females through quality education, yields huge benefits to the society. However, the education gender gap in sub-Saharan Africa remains a challenge. Thus, the problem of the gender gap in teaching is addressed in this study which investigates secondary school teachers' perceptions of gender in their own teaching, using qualitative methods. From the findings, teachers' perceptions of gender influence their classroom practice and remains a challenge due to inadequate training. Interestingly, teachers' perceptions indicate that girls outpace boys in learning and academic performance. Strategies to address gender-related challenges in teaching, implications for educational praxis and education research are also highlighted. Therefore, this book provides useful insights regarding gender and quality education in secondary schools of Cameroon that address the problem of the gender gap in teaching. The book contributes to the quality dimension of the gender perspective in teachers' classroom practice and targets education scholars, teacher educators and education policy makers in countries of sub-Saharan Africa.



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Gender and Quality Education



Brot
für die Welt

New Perspectives on Quality Education in Sub-Saharan Africa

Edited by Christine Nyiramana, Susanne Ress, Tharcisse Gatwa,
Annette Scheunpflug and Penine Uwimbabazi

Gender and Quality Education: Perceptions of Secondary School Teachers of Cameroon

Mercy Lemnyuy Fai

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Gender and Quality Education

New Perspectives on Quality Education in Sub-Saharan Africa

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Over recent decades, national and international policy actors together with teachers, parents, community leaders, and faith-based organizations have made great progress in providing access to education. Today around the world, more children are in school than ever before. Yet being in school is not enough. The already exceptional efforts to expand access to schooling require even more exceptional efforts to ensure the quality of education that schools provide. This series presents new findings on competence-based teaching, learner-centered pedagogies, cognitive activation, critical thinking skills, and socially responsive and inclusive approaches to learning in the context of Sub-Saharan Africa. The authors in this series have conducted their research in the context of the *International Master Program of Educational Quality in Developing Countries* (IMPEQ) at the University of Bamberg in partnership with the Protestant University of Rwanda, the Free University of the Great Lake Region in the Democratic Republic of Congo, and the Evangelical University of Cameroon. The research was made possible through the funding from Bread for the World. The monographs in this series highlight the importance of continuous teacher education and, most importantly, the centrality of efficient leadership for fostering educational policies and practices that meet the needs of all students.

*This Book is dedicated to my parents, Rev. and Mrs.
Faimbarang, my husband, Frederick Njobati,
our daughter, Sylvie Njobati, our granddaughter,
Tamara Simolen Fomonyuy and our family sons
Njodzeka Collins and Fai Elison.*

Gender and Quality Education: Perceptions of Secondary School Teachers of Cameroon

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CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES.....	viii
ABBREVIATIONS.....	ix
SERIES EDITORS' PREFACE.....	xi
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	xv
1. INTRODUCTION.....	1
1.1 Gender and education in the Cameroonian Context.....	2
1.2 Scientific discourse on gender and educational policy.....	13
1.3 My personal experiences with gender in education.....	20
1.4 Research question.....	23
1.5 Structure of the book.....	24
2. TEACHERS' CLASSROOM PRACTICES FROM A GENDER PERSPECTIVE	25
2.1 The quality dimension of gender.....	25
2.2 Understanding the notion of gender and quality education....	27
2.3 Gender-related terminologies and classroom practices.....	31
2.4 Understanding gender in teaching.....	37
2.5 Challenges regarding gender and mitigations.....	50
2.6 Conclusion.....	54
3. METHODOLOGY.....	57
3.1 Qualitative research approach.....	57
3.2 The Sample.....	60
3.3 Data collection.....	62
3.4 Data analysis.....	65

3.5 Challenges and limits of the research.....	68
4. FINDINGS.....	71
4.1 Teachers' understanding of gender and related terms.....	71
4.2 Teachers' perceptions of girls and boys in and out of classrooms.....	75
4.3 Teachers' perceptions of students' interest and performance by gender.....	78
4.4 Teachers' general perceptions of boys and girls.....	85
4.5 Teachers' perceptions of learning resources and the curriculum	87
4.6 Gender related challenges in teaching.....	89
4.7 Strategies to address the gender-related challenges.....	91
4.8 Summary of findings.....	93
5. GENDER DIMENSION OF QUALITY TEACHING.....	95
5.1 Implementing gender sensitive pedagogies for quality improvement	97
5.2 Life skills education as a mitigating strategy.....	103
6. CONCLUSION.....	109
6.1 Conclusion from findings.....	109
6.2 Recommendations for educational practices.....	110
6.3 Recommendations for education research.....	111
APPENDIX.....	113
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	115
LIST OF TABLES	
Table 1: Sample table.....	61

ABBREVIATIONS

CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women
EFA	Education for All
FAWE	Forum for African Women Educationalists
FES	Friedrich Ebert Stiftung
GBV	Gender-Based Violence
GeED	Gender Empowerment and Development
GGGR	Global Gender Gap Report
IMPEQ	International Master Program in Educational Quality
MDG	Millennium Development Goal
MSI	Management System International
NGPC	National Gender Policy Cameroon
OECD	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
STEM	Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics
UNESCO	United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation
UNGEI	United Nations Girls Educational Initiative
USAID	United State Agency for International Development
WEF	World Economic Forum

SERIES EDITORS' PREFACE

Beyond the fact that the completion of compulsory education has substantially improved over the past twenty years, achieving educational quality for all continues to be a major challenge in Sub-Saharan Africa where many children do not reach basic skills in reading and numeracy by the end of primary school (UNESCO, 2014). A focus on quality education is thus paramount to improve the overall performance of educational systems and to support students' academic achievement. High quality education requires high quality research that combines sophisticated knowledge of educational theories, adequate research methods, and contextualizing sensibilities for local realities as they intersect with global political, economic, social, and historical forces. Every educational dimension imaginable – school access, didactics and pedagogical approaches, academic content and competences – if approached with such a notion of high-quality research presents itself as a challenge that poses many questions and few certain answers. To nonetheless forge pathways towards much needed answers requires to study intellect, diligence, creativity, and a supportive community of scholars engaged in critical feedback.

Monographs in this series carefully investigate educational concepts and theories as they pertain to quality education in Sub-Saharan Africa. They cover many topics ranging from leadership skills, competence-based and learner-centered pedagogies, cognitive activation, critical thinking skills, and socially responsive and inclusive approaches to teaching. The monographs go beyond theory in that they reflect on the practical implications of the research

findings. The authors provide in-depth analyses grounded in a deep knowledge of and experiences in the context in which the research was conducted. They articulate recommendations that touch on the macro-, meso-, and micro-levels of schooling. In this way, the series provides a collective space for emerging African scholars to discuss their research on education to impart lessons for mastering 21st century challenges in education everywhere.

Mercy Lemnyuy Fai undertakes a crucial journey in research with a sensitive and near-taboo related thematic genre; *Gender and Quality Education. Perceptions of Secondary School Teachers of Cameroon*. She approaches the subject by underscoring its inestimable attachment and binding nature to quality education in non-state, faith based and public low fee secondary schools in Cameroon. Mercy introduces the problematic of her study by ingeniously and disinterestedly linking the relevance of gender sensitive education in the global discourse and at the same time, identifying the need, but yet, an interest of nipping in the bud the challenges of the gender gap and subsequent triangulation with professional development and social opportunities without hiccups in the near future.

Mrs. Fai theoretically handles this by a deep literature review that reflectively brings to bear gender equity and equality in policies, teachers' perceptions, teaching materials, and classroom practices including concept definition of gender stereotypes, gender identity and roles. She brilliantly creates an interconnectivity between global/ international, national and local (contextual) dimensions of her study and relates this to gender equality/equity as the access to educational and professional opportunities for boys and

girls as well as their participation in class. Mrs. Fai adopted the qualitative research approach with semi-structured interviews wherein she interjects her grasp in building relevant links of the related theory and her smart display of expertise during the intervention and the procedure for her data analysis. Her findings correlate gender equality, equity in teaching through a gender sensitive pedagogy and the necessities for equal opportunities to boys and girls in classroom participation and the breaking of gender stereotypes. She hinges such findings to the desire and ability of developing the cognitive and social competences of humanity to assure the attainment of a holistic human development for sustainable societal advancement and these lofty efforts are only attainable via a firm foundation in quality education.

PREFACE AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Quality education is the key to sustainable development and encompasses several dimensions including the gender perspective. In the light of the gender dimension, the importance of the female folk (women and girls) as partners in the development process becomes crucial for a holistic development and the benefit of the society. However, the quality of education in sub-Saharan Africa lags and contributes to the underdevelopment of the sub region with women and girls who constitute half of humanity largely relegated and deprived from access to quality education. When they have access, other factors impede retention, completion and learner achievement. Therefore, this book provides useful insights regarding gender and quality education in secondary schools of Cameroon that address the problem of the gender gap in teaching. The book contributes to the quality dimension of the gender perspective in teachers' classroom practice and targets education scholars, teacher educators and education policy makers in countries of sub-Saharan Africa.

This book is an important milestone in my educational career, because it is my first scientific publication, I therefore acknowledge any flaws herein, regarding the norms of academic writing.

To reach this far in the journey of a thousand miles, I did not travel alone. I owe gratitude to different organizations and several individuals who journeyed with me and played significant roles behind the scene for the successful realization of this book. I remain grateful to the international master program selection team for giving me the opportunity to pursue the master program

and most importantly, Bread for the World, for providing the bursary. I salute the committee of the ministry of the Presbyterian Church in Cameroon (PCC) for granting me the permission to engage in this enviable and valuable work-study international master program “Educational quality for developing countries” which, enabled me to realize this publication. To the host universities: The University of Bamberg (UB) in Germany and the Protestant Institute of Arts and Social Sciences (PIASS) in Rwanda, I doff my hat for their provision of space, conducive and enabling learning environments for deep reflections and abstractions that characterize International Master Program in Educational Quality (IMPEQ) studies. My profound gratitude goes to the indefatigable Prof. Dr. Scheunpflug Annette and her team; Dr. Susanne Röss, Frederick Njobati, Christine Nyiramana and Claude Ernest Njoya, for their relentless coaching and mentorship, which provided me useful insights and competences of academic writing that led to the realization and publication of this scientific piece of work. My special acknowledgement also goes to the correctors of my master thesis; Dr. Susanne Röss and Dr. Matthias Borgstede for the incredible and unique task of providing an in-depth analysis of my work which enabled me to improve on this publication.

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for the diverse and insightful contributions during different colloquia and informal sessions that gave me a direction for further reflection. Conducting the research could not have been successful without the purposefully selected secondary school teachers of Cameroon who readily accepted to leave the comfort of their homes to share their experiences and perceptions through conversations, despite the heightening insecurity in the Anglophone region of Cameroon where the research was conducted. I remain indebted to my parents, husband and children for the encouragement, support and high expectation that kept me on my toes, despite the exacting experiences and challenging moments. I am elated and fulfilled to publish this piece of work on gender and quality education, a seed I nursed and nurtured since 2006 when I became the gender resource person for the pedagogic in-service training program (ISTP) for which I also owe gratitude for laying a solid foundation for my professional career. Above all I remain thankful to God almighty for the good health, strength and the fortitude to endure the arduous task of working and studying as well as the accomplishment of this book. To Him be the Glory.

1.

INTRODUCTION

The following study addresses gender and quality education, with a focus on the question of how secondary school teachers of Cameroon perceive gender in their teaching. Quality education is the key to sustainable development and encompasses several dimensions including the gender perspective (Ombati & Ombati, 2012, p.132; UNGEI, 2012, p.3). Across the globe and especially in sub-Saharan Africa research shows that women and girls, who constitute half of humanity, have for a long time been deprived of their rights in the social, economic, educational, cultural and political spheres (Brookfield, 2013, p.5; Ombati & Ombati 2012, p.116). Research further shows that depriving women and girls creates a gender gap in favour of the males and influences the economic growth of the society (Djapou Fouthe, 2017, p.5; Ombati & Ombati, 2012, p.119).

This gender gap describes the differences in rights, roles, responsibilities and opportunities between males and females. Therefore, to ensure the holistic development of the society, it needs to be addressed (Fielding, 2014, p. 2; Brookfield, 2013, p.5). Thus, empowering the female folk becomes crucial to deconstruct the gender imbalance (gender inequality and gender inequity) that affects not

only women and girls but also the society (UN General Assembly, 2015, p.6), although the question of whether empowering women disempowers men still remains (Longwe, 1998, p.20). In this regard, literature shows that the gender educational gap is adequately addressed through quality education (Ombati & Ombati, 2012, p.132). Thus, the study at hand seeks to address the problem of the gender educational gap with focus on the gap in teaching. This is realised through qualitative research using semi-structured interview for data collection and the descriptive method of data analysis. This qualitative approach is a phenomenological inquiry regarding teachers' perceptions of gender in their own classroom practice, utilising a constructivist paradigm to frame their knowledge claims and the symbolic interactionism approach to search for meanings that build up to findings (Rosiek, 2013, p.55; Saven-Baden & Major, 2013, p.443). Meanwhile, the gender perspective is paralleled by the ethical responsibility to help decrease the gender gap in teaching through quality education.

1.1 Gender and education in the Cameroonian Context

Cameroon located at the hinge of Africa around Central and West Africa, is differentiated into 10 regions and the study at hand is conducted in the North West region of Cameroon, one of the two Anglophone regions in the country (Wotany, 2012, p.23; World Bank, 2017, p.2). The study is situated in the framework of the Anglophone sub-system of education and within the background of the Protestant education system.

1.1.1 The Sociocultural and Religious Context of Cameroon

Apart from the imported French, English and Christian cultures ,which were imposed during the colonial era (Ngalim, 2014, p.335), Cameroon is endowed with a huge cultural diversity and thus given the status of Africa in miniature (ibid., p.345). With a population of 25.5 million, 49.9% males and 50.1% females (United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs: Population Division, February 2019), Cameroon is multicultural, multilingual and multi-religious with ethnic origins from the Bantus, the Semi-Bantus and the Sudanese (Dze-Ngwa, Ayafor & Agborbechem, 2009, p. 21; Sama, 2007, p.196). There exist more than 250 ethnic groups and 250 languages (Ayunijam, 2007, p.51). On religious lines, the northern part is predominantly Muslim and the southern, western and eastern parts are mainly Christians (Kofele-Kale, 1986, p.55; Sama, 2007, p.196) and some traditionalists (Sakki, Kassea, Vauhkonen, & Pirtilla-Backman, 2010, p.68).

The North West region of Cameroon where the study is conducted has its own peculiarities. With a population of about 1.9 million people (2015 statistics) the North West region is also multicultural, multilingual and multi-religious. The English language is the official language of communication and instruction in schools, rooted in the British colonial heritage. Meanwhile, Pidgin English, is the lingua franca that cuts across educated and non-educated individuals (Ayunijam, 2007, p.57). The diversity in the region also establishes varied traditional gender norms influenced by diverse cultural values, patriarchy and gender stereotypes. Due to ignorance, the family contributes to the gender differentiation (Fielding, 2014,

p.2), a reflection of the contemporary society. Although there is an increasing awareness amongst parents with changing times, the gender differentiation persists contributing to the gender gap in favour of boys (FES & GeED, 2010, p.12). This is visible as parents enforce gender roles in nurturing male and female children with prescribed societal constructs (Daoust et al., 2012, p. 47). For instance, in my locality, female children are nurtured to take up subservient responsibilities of domestication and preparation for marriage while the male children are nurtured to take up more strenuous tasks and paid job opportunities. Meanwhile, when parents are faced with a choice of schooling for their children, they prefer boys to girls (Brookfield, 2013, p, 19. Johannes & Noula, 2011, p. 104) due to the expectation that sooner than later girls get married and take up matrimonial and reproductive responsibilities (Brookfield, 2013, p.19). Furthermore, girls' schooling irregularity and absenteeism is higher compared to boys (Daoust et al., 2012, p. 47). This, in part, is due to their engagement in other family income generating activities, household chores, menstruation, caregiving to siblings, the sick and aged family members (ibid).

Thus, these socio-cultural experiences in the region and Cameroon as a whole establish the existence of gender differentiation consciously or unconsciously against the females with its consequences on development of the society. In this light, the education system accommodates boys and girls (students) and men and women (teachers) from diverse backgrounds with varied worldviews. These worldviews contribute to shape the students' learning needs, interests and aspirations on the one hand and the classroom practice of the teachers on the other. (Ngalim, 2014, p. 345; UNESCO, 2014, p. 5).

1.1.2 The Cameroonian Education System and Gender

Gwanfogbe, (2008, p. 42) and Pence & Nsamenang, (2008, p. 21) analyse the contemporary Cameroon education system from an African perspective and look at the education foundation from three dimensions; the indigenous, the western-Christian and the Islamic-Arabic. Although the western view negates the indigenous education with the claim that it is not written (Gwanfogbe, 2008, p. 42), the influence of the indigenous education on the contemporary Cameroon education system cannot be undermined. In the light of this study, the topic is within the context of a *mélange* of the indigenous and the western education in Cameroon. While the indigenous education is embedded in the aboriginal socio-cultural values and traditions that existed before colonization (Pence & Nsamenang, 2008, p. 22) and continue to exist, the western education is the heritage from the French and British education systems known as the Francophone and the Anglophone sub-systems of education respectively (Ngalim, 2014, p. 335; Wohlfahrt, 2018, p. 1).

Cameroon therefore has two official languages; French and English and each sub-system utilises the predominant coloniser's language as the language of instruction. However, "bilingual schools" exist wherein the two sub-systems operate side by side on the same campus (Eyovi, 2015, p. 652). In Cameroon, education is largely provided by the state and supported by lay private institutions (non-state, non-faith based public schools) and confessional institutions (non-state faith based public schools) (Lange, 2016, p. 68; Wotany, 2012, p. 58).

Bamenda, the capital of the region, is cosmopolitan and hosts the regional delegation of secondary education. Thus, the secondary education hierarchy in the region stretches from the regional delegate, the divisional delegates, principals, vice principals, teachers in charge of discipline to the teachers (Wotany, 2012, pp. 48-51). Men constitute the majority (Daoust et al, 2012, p. 23), although there is an increase in the number of female teachers and the number, appointed into leadership positions (ibid., p. 25). Like elsewhere in the country, pre-service teacher trainings take place at the Higher Teacher Training College (HTTC) in the University of Bamenda in the North West region of Cameroon. Here, secondary school teachers are educated on didactics and pedagogy with little attention on gender issues (Daoust et al., 2012, p. 50). Meanwhile, in-service teacher trainings are organised by regional and divisional pedagogic inspectors in collaboration with subject associations. These trainings adopt the traditional paper presentation approach and are gender insensitive. In the same vein, within the institutions in the region, leadership contributes to the gender gap through gender insensitive leadership style. This is made explicit in gender biases against women in appointments to duty posts, participation in decision making, language use and gender power relations (Daoust et al., 2012, p. 42).

Therefore, the study is conducted in the North West region of Cameroon with focus on the Protestant education system in the context of indigenous plurality in Cameroon. Despite important differences between the Anglophone and the Francophone education systems, the education gender gap is similar. Thus, the study provides an insight of the situation in the Cameroon education system with the

objective to contribute to education quality and educational science and not to make generalisations (Saven Baden & Major, 2013, p. 314).

According to research, the education gender gap in sub-Saharan Africa and Cameroon, is partly rooted in the colonial legacy (Fielding, 2014, p. 4, 29; Sakki, et al., 2010, p. 70). On this score, the British and French education systems that existed during the period of occupation, from the early 20th century to mid-20th century, were based on the needs and interests of the occupiers (Fielding, 2014, p. 3). The British operated a technical school in British Southern Cameroons to train boys to serve as technicians in the British administration. Meanwhile, domestic science programs were organized for girls to train in catering and household care (Sakki et al., 2010, p. 71). The different trainings enforced different gender roles and responsibilities for males and females. By this, men were prepared for salaried jobs while women were nurtured for household domestic services and marriage (Fielding, 2014, p. 4; Nana-Fabu, 2006, p. 149). Although it is argued that the aim of the colonial education was to inculcate the Western culture into the local women and men, Fielding (2014, p. 2) argues that the women acquired knowledge and skills that equipped them for formal job opportunities in the society. In the same vein the French colonial education prepared girls and women for domestic chores, child rearing, healthcare and teaching (Fielding, 2014, p. 7; Sakki et al., 2010, p. 71). These legacies persist and have become sedimented as stereotypes in the Cameroon society, influencing teachers' classroom practice and affecting boys' and girls' learning, opportunities and life aspirations.

Within the framework of the contemporary Cameroon education system, research shows that several factors also contribute to the gender gap; poverty, poor implementation of government policies, lack of political will, parental influence, cultural value, patriarchy, and teachers' classroom practice (Johannes & Noula, 2011, p. 104; Tenikue, 2010, p. 21). These factors largely affect women and girls, and thus deprive them from realizing their full potential (Brookfield, 2013, pp. 19-21; Sakki et al., 2010, p. 70; UNESCO, 2014, p. 182). From literature, Cameroon is in progress to reduce the gender gap of access to schooling, especially at the primary education level. However, the gap increases up the academic ladder against women and girls (Fielding, 2014, p. 2; Johannes & Noula, 2011, p. 104). Meanwhile, research further shows that educational institutions contribute to the gender gap through the school culture and classroom practice (Daoust et al., 2012, p. 12; Ifegbesan, 2010, p.35; Mutekwe et al., p. 317). In the study at hand, teachers' classroom practice is examined as one of the factors that influences the gender educational gap (MIS & EQUATE, 2008, p. 3; UNESCO, 2015, p. 40). Although little research has been conducted in Cameroon on teachers' perceptions of gender regarding their own classroom practice in secondary education, literature reveals inadequate implementation of gender equality and gender equity in teaching due to the deficiency in teachers' professional development from a gender perspective (Daoust et al., 2012, p.50). Thus, gender stereotyping, gender bias learning resources, gender insensitive content (curriculum), gender insensitive teaching learning process, teachers' attitude and gender-based violence characterise teachers' classroom practice

in the Cameroon education system (Daoust et al., 2012, pp. 46-47) and contribute to the gender gap in education.

Regarding gender stereotype, Brookfield (2013, p.19) and Fielding (2014, p.2) identify gender stereotyping in Cameroon schools and classrooms, in which females are considered inferior to males. This means that while society ascribes subservient, domestic and low paying positions to females, decision making, leading positions, white collar and highly paid jobs become the preserve for men (Nana-Fabu, 2006, p. 150; Sakki et al., 2010, p. 71). Furthermore, studies reveal that there are more female teachers in the primary than the secondary and tertiary levels of education. This is in line with the traditional roles and responsibilities of child-rearing attributed to women (Daoust et al., 2012, p. 21). In addition, research also shows that gender divisions influence subject choices of students. For example, more boys than girls pursue the sciences at the secondary, high school and in the universities (FAWE, 2013, p. 21; Fielding, 2014, p. 133). The lack of female role models contribute to this trend as literature indicates that most science teachers at these levels are males (Fielding, 2014, p.133).

In the context of the learning resources, literature reveals that in Cameroon the learning resources are for the most part gender biased in a way that pictures, demonstrations and narratives favour of the males. For instance, some textbooks portray males in jobs like engineering, medicine and politics while females are portrayed as housewives, market women and child caregivers. This reinforces gender stereotypes (Daoust et al., 2012, p.47) that limit boys' and girls' interests, learning opportunities and life aspirations. Studies also show that the curriculum of the Cameroon

secondary education system is inadequate in the present and future perspectives (Fielding, 2014, p.2; Wotany, 2012, p.5). It is indifferent to the gender dimension, thus enforces gender differentiation.

For instance, in most subject areas of humanities, science and mathematics, female contributions are not consciously recognised, and thus the subject content mostly reflects the patriarchal system of male dominance and female subordination (Fielding, 2014, p.2; Longwe, 1998, p.19).

Regarding the attitude of teachers, empirical evidence shows that in Cameroon, teachers' manifestation of gender power relations is reflected at a horizontal and vertical level. Horizontally, male teachers assume superiority over female colleagues showing that they are more knowledgeable and teach better than the females (Daoust, et al., 2012, p.12). This influences female teachers' self-esteem and motivation to teach. At a vertical level, male and female teachers wield power over boys and girls through decision-making, authoritative behaviours and use of abusive language which affect their self-concept, learning and motivation to pursue some subjects (Daoust et al., 2012, p. 12; Tanyi, 2016, pp. 212-213).

Although the Cameroon law of 1998 on the orientation of education proscribes violence in all its forms in school (Daoust, 2012, p. 36), there is evidence of gender-based violence in and out of the classrooms. This is largely perpetuated by male students and male teachers on girls and female teachers in secondary institutions of Cameroon (Daoust et al., 2012, p. 35; Djapou Fouthe, 2017, p. 2). This practice continues unabated and victims suffer in silence due to cultural norms and the fear of stigmatization. This

affects the victims' self-esteem and productivity.

In the teaching learning process, empirical evidence shows that teachers in Cameroon secondary schools are not consciously gender sensitive in their classroom practice due to inadequate training in gender issues (ibid, p. 10). Thus, the pedagogies do not respond to girls' and boys' specific learning and psychosocial needs as teachers often practice the "one size fit all" approach (Daoust et al., 2012, p.47; Tabulawa, 2003, p.22) with its negative effects on the learners. Although educational policies exist regarding gender equality and gender equity, teachers are not aware due to a lack of information flow, follow-up and supervision (Daoust, 2012, p. 57; Mefire et al., 2017, p.42).

1.1.3 Gender in the Protestant Education System of Cameroon

The study at hand is conducted within the framework of the Protestant education system (Lange, 2016, p.68) is a non-state, faith-based, public low fees education system (Lange, 2016, p.181) having institutions at all education levels in both rural and urban areas, that are entitled to state subsidy which is often minimal and irregular (Lange, 2016, p.68; Wotany, 2012, p.58). Consequently, the Protestant education secondary school teachers' salaries are relatively low (Bregman, 2008, p. 45) compared to teachers of state public secondary schools.

Meanwhile, the teachers have relatively high workload and are more committed to their duty (p.44), and thus provide quality education based on academic performance (Wotany, 2012, p.58). The research at hand targets secondary education teachers in co-educational boarding

and day schools in urban areas of the region. The study is conducted in the protestant education institutions to explore the gender disparities observed in the school culture that disfavour female teachers and girls. These gender disparities reflect a low teaching quality from a gender perspective. Also, little research has been conducted in the Cameroon secondary education system regarding the gender perspective of teachers' classroom practice. Through this study, the empirical evidence provides a bases for decision making regarding improvement, and thus contributes to the quality of education in the Protestant education system and the Cameroon education system.

Considering the strengths and weaknesses of the Protestant secondary education system regarding gender, the situation of available human resources, the conditions in which teachers are trained and the supervision of teachers to improve on their classroom practice from a gender perspective are examined.

In the case of human resources, male teachers outnumber female teachers, a situation that is typical of secondary schools in the Cameroon education systems (Daoust et al., 2012, p.23). The lack of female teachers deprives boys and girls from female role models and the realization that both males and females have the potential to teach in secondary institutions (Mutekwe et al., 2013, p.317). However, there is an increase in the number of female teachers employed and those appointed into positions of responsibility signifying more awareness and improvement.

Furthermore, in the Protestant education system, female students consistently outnumber male students contributing in reducing the gender gap of access to

education. This reflects the conscious admission of more female students in the institutions a strategy to give more learning opportunities to girls.

Regarding the conditions of teacher training, the Protestant education board recruits for the most part university degree holders without formal teacher training. To compensate for the lack of training, the Protestant in-service training program provides pre-service and in-service pedagogic trainings (p.72) for all secondary education teachers (Lange, 2016, p.67). These trainings are gender sensitive and emphasis gender considerations in teachers' classroom practice.

Regarding the supervision of teachers, the Cameroon education system lacks school leadership training (Wotany, 2012, p.7). In this light, Protestant secondary school leaders, who are responsible for supervision, are not formally trained and largely depend on informal and non-formal learning on the job (Wohlfahrt, 2018, pp. 2-3). In this light, the in-service pedagogic training program organizes trainings (Lange, 2016, p. 170) on gender sensitive leadership and pedagogy to equip school leaders to supervise teachers' classroom practice for teaching quality improvement.

1.2 Scientific discourse on gender and educational policy

The scientific discourse on gender and educational policy brings to light, literature that conveys the relevance of recognizing females and their contribution in the development process. To this end, three aspects are highlighted: the position of females in education, the international and the national policies in the regard.

1.2.1 *The position of females in education*

One half of the human population, the female folk, had been left behind in all spheres of life, from time immemorial (Lerner, 1986, p. 223). Lerner (1986) highlights a patriarchal world, carefully designed by men, where women acclaim a subordinate position shaped by societal norms and values (p. 218). Lerner and other scholars ascertain the influence of patriarchy in women's educational denial, lack of historical awareness, differentiation of women according to their sexual life, restrictions and coercions, deprivation from political power, and denial of access to socio-economic resources (Lerner, 1986, p. 217; Nana-Fabu, 2006, p. 149). Studies show that involving women and girls in the development process yields huge benefits to the entire society (Brookfield, 2013, pp. 5-7; Korenius, 2018, pp. 8-9; UNESCO, 2014, p. 143; Verspoor, 2008, p. 5). This is possible only when men and women work in synergy to empower the female folk through quality education (UNESCO, 2014, p. 217). Thus, pressure from scholars, feminists, and international movements loyal to gender equality and gender equity, have influenced the international community to recognize the importance of empowering women and girls for the holistic development of individuals and the society.

1.2.2 *The international dimension*

Education for all, established in the 16th century during the reformation by Martin Luther and his followers clamoured for the education of the masses, including boys and girls, at a time when education was for a privileged few boys (Painter, 1889, p. 135). In spite of enormous challenges of a patriarchal world, education for all has been on the

international scene as reiterated in the universal declaration of human rights of 1948, in which article 26 highlights the right of everybody to education (UNESCO, 2004, p. 27). Despite the treaties and conventions signed and enacted, the progress to attain the desired education for all goal has been slow, with women and girls in the sub-Saharan Africa sub-region lagging behind. Thus, the UNESCO report of 1972, on the development of education emphasizes the elimination of inequalities and the establishment of equitable participation for quality enhancement (UNESCO, 2004, p. 30). In the same vein, in 1989, the convention on the right of the child was enacted and underscores the importance of the development of the child's social and cognitive competences while improving on gender equality and gender equity (UNESCO, 2014, p. 31). Furthermore, the Jomtien World Conference on education in 1990 emphasises on education for all and also highlights quality education as a precondition for equity (UNESCO, 2004, p. 29). 10 years later, the education for all movement established in the year 2000, six education for all goals rooted in the principle of leaving no one behind in education (UNESCO, 2014, p. 94). In this light, the fifth and the sixth goals become pertinent in this study. While the fifth goal emphasises the eradication of gender disparity and the achievement of gender equality, the sixth goal highlights the importance of enhancing quality education (UNESCO, 2014, p. 44).

Besides, in accordance with the commitment for the attainment of the EFA goals, the United Nations Girls' Education Initiative (UNGEI) aimed at promoting girls' education through policy and practice (UNESCO, 2015, p. 31) becomes crucial. Meanwhile, the Millennium

Development Goal (MDG) 3 emphasizes gender equality and women's empowerment to ensure that all boys and girls have equal access and full participation in education in order to eradicate the gender disparity by 2015 (p. 28). Furthermore, the United Nation Convention on the Elimination of all forms of discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) in article 10, emphasizes the eradication of discriminatory practices to ensure equal access to quality education for all while eliminating gender stereotypes at all educational sectors and levels (Daoust et al., 2012, p.13; Ifegbesan, 2010, p.29). Similarly, the second decade of education for Africa plan of action; 2006-2015, challenged African states to ensure gender equality and equity in education while engaging in girls and women empowerment with a focus on increasing the number of female teachers and a gender responsive classroom practice (Africa Union, 2006, p. 5). Meanwhile, the 2015 Gender and Education For All (EFA) monitoring Report, analyses gender equality in education, 15 years after the ratification of conventions at the World Education Forum of 2000 in Dakar. This analysis reveals that although there has been progress, gender inequalities in teaching against girls persists due to varied challenges (UNESCO, 2015, pp. 40-44).

In addition, UNESCO, (2017b), identifies and analyses the gender inequalities that lead to the gender gap against women and girls in education in the sub region of Africa and proposes strategies to reach gender equality in all domains including women and girls representation in science. Furthermore, the Forum for African Women Educationalists (FAWE), a non-governmental organization operating in 32 different countries in Africa, has conducted

several studies to address the gender inequalities against women and girls through gender sensitive teaching.

Also, international women conferences have been organized by the United Nations, aimed at the empowerment of women and girls. The first conference of 1975 focused on violence against females perpetuated largely by males due to gender power relations (Reichert, 1998, p. 373). In 1980, the second world conference held and realized a convention on the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women (CEDAW). In the same vein, the third conference of 1985 assessed the impact of the other conferences. A unanimous decision to empower women and children regarding access to education and the fight against violence was crucial (Reichert, 1989, p. 373). Meanwhile, the 1995 fourth women's conference in Beijing advocated for the universal human rights to include the rights of women and girls (p. 372). In addition, the 2015 sustainable development goals (SDG) 4 and 5 on education and gender equality respectively articulate ensuring gender equality and gender equity to bridge the gap between males and females and assure quality education for all (UNESCO, 2017a, p.7).

1.2.3 The national dimension

Although ranked 133 out of 149 countries in the World Economic Forum Gender Gap Index in educational attainment 2018 (WEF, 2018, p. 13), studies show that Cameroon has ratified several conventions and is part of the international community committed to close the gender gap through a gender approach in all walks of life including education (Djapou Fouthe, 2017, p. 5; Mefire, et al, 2017, p. 35). Responding to this commitment, both the

government and the civil society with its non-governmental organizations, work in synergy from different fronts for the common purpose to reduce the gender gap (FES & GeED, 2010, p. 17). Thus, in compliance to the call regarding education for all, research shows that several policies have been enacted by the Cameroon government, although there have been challenges of implementation (Mefire et al., pp. 36-37). To this end, a National Gender Policy of Cameroon (NGPC) to enhance gender equality and gender equity is ratified with the aim of narrowing the gender disparity between males and females in all spheres of the society (Djapou, 2017, p. 5; Mefire, et al., 2017 p. 37). Also, the Cameroon education orientation law of 1998 highlighted the necessity for equal access and full participation of everyone in education irrespective of sex (Daoust et al., 2012, p. 13). Meanwhile, the 2002 national action plan of education for all was endorsed with emphasis on equal access, retention, full participation and the development of the full potential for all boys, girls, men and women (Daoust et al., 2012, p. 13).

Furthermore, the government of Cameroon engaged in a sector wide approach to education in accordance with the Dakar 2000 framework and the millennium development goal (MDG) 3. This approach which aimed at increasing parity in access and completion of primary and secondary education focused on girls and other disadvantaged children (Djapou, 2017, pp. 5, 13). The approach further underscored the improvement of quality education through the integration of gender responsiveness in teacher professionalization and classroom practice as well as school leadership and human resource management (p. 13). Another initiative in this direction was the growth

and employment strategy paper, adopted in 2009 for the decade (2010-2020) which underpins increasing the involvement of women in decision making as well as in social, economic and educational development processes to enhance equity and equality and assure education quality in Cameroon (p. 14). Furthermore, the national gender policy document for 2011-2020 produced by the ministry of women's empowerment and the family also highlights the enhancement of males and females access to quality education and professional training opportunities and also the inclusion of gender in the national policy agenda for adequate implementation, monitoring and evaluation (p. 14). Due to the international community's commitment and the Cameroon's initiative to attain the education for all targets, progress has been made. Nevertheless, the gender gap persists, with huge effects on the society, especially in sub-Saharan Africa (Fielding, 2014, p. 2). In this light, research shows that several factors contribute to the persistence of the education gender gap some of which include colonial legacy, cultural values, patriarchal society, gender stereotypes, poverty, teaching quality and inadequate implementation of government policies (Mefire et al., 2017, p. 43) which affect the education of the girl child. These factors inhibit equal and equitable access and participation of all boys and girls in learning, thus impedes the advancement in education quality. Therefore, the study at hand seek to gain an insight of teachers' perceptions regarding gender in their own teaching as a contribution to address the gender gap in teaching.

1.3 My personal experiences with gender in education

The articulation of gender in my personal context is based on my experience of professional development in gender sensitive education through the Protestant pedagogic in-service training program of Cameroon. Although a trained secondary school teacher with certification, my understanding of gender in teaching was limited due to the absence of a gender perspective in my training. A turning point in my teaching career and regarding gender became a reality when I gained an in-service teacher professional development on gender and education. During the training I had several opportunities to reflect on my own teaching and thus acquired a new lens to view the society and education institutions from a gender perspective. I realized the effect of the gender differentiation of male and female which hitherto was a normalcy. I further reflected about a society of gender equality and gender equity and its enormous social, economic, cultural and political benefits. Putting on the new lens, although there is an increasing awareness about gender sensitivity in the teaching and learning process, I observe that the classroom practice of teachers from a gender perspective is inadequate. Gender power relations, gender stereotype, gender-based violence and gender roles characterise teaching, reflecting how the social construct of differentiation between males and females is etched in educators and shape their behaviour and attitudes towards each other and the students. Thus, my personal experience with gender in education is reflected in the positions I hold in the Protestant education system as a teacher, teacher educator, school leader, dean of studies and the gender resource person for the Protestant pedagogic in-service training program in Cameroon. In the

light of my functions, I operate with a mind-set of bridging the gender gap I observe in my daily interactions in and out of the school setting.

The question of the development of this mind-set is embedded in my interest, experience, and training on gender in education that enabled me to develop adequate social and cognitive competences to adopt a gender approach in life. This means that as an advocate for gender equality and gender equity I apply the knowledge, skills and attitude regarding gender, in my classroom practice, school leadership and teacher educator and gender resource person.

In my classroom practice, I consciously provide equal opportunities to boys and girls and exercise fairness while responding to boys' and girls' specific needs (Ifegbesan, 2010, p. 36). Also, I encourage students to show respect and fairness to one another and promote a positive school and classroom climate that enhances learning (Scheerens, 2004, p. 44). Furthermore, I adapt gender bias learning resources to portray the capability of both boys and girls pursuing the sciences (Korenius, 2018, p. 31; Gachukia & Chung, 2005, p. 53; Sunderland, 2000, p. 152). Meanwhile, as a female science teacher, I serve as a role model for the students and attract more girls to offer science subjects (Daoust et al., 2012, p. 27; Mutekwe et al., 2013, p. 317). In addition, I sensitize and educate the students to understand that gender stereotypes are barriers that limit learning and career opportunities (Unal et al., 2008, p. 43).

As a dean of studies, I promote gender equality and gender equity from two perspectives: students and

teachers. Regarding the students, the elections of class proctors and the student government are democratic and ensure equity and equal opportunities for all eligible students irrespective of sex while encouraging girls who largely turn down leadership positions (Ifegbesan, 2010, p. 36). In the same light, the representation of students in co-curricular activities in and out of school considers the gender perspective to ensure fairness and equal opportunities. Furthermore, a conscious effort is made to ensure the enrolment of more girls, since they are disadvantaged in access. Meanwhile, at the start of each academic year a career orientation program is organised for first year students of the lower secondary school and higher secondary school. This opportunity exposes both boys and girls to a variety of careers and role models to create awareness about choosing a career based on interest, hard work and determination and not on sex. This is further emphasized during gender club activities. I also sensitize and educate parents of children in the institution where I work on their responsibility to guide and allow children to make informed choices and take informed decisions about their future without any constraints.

In the context of teachers, although some female teachers avoid taking up responsibilities other than teaching, I consciously encourage and assign them to posts of responsibility, empowering them to take informed decisions and give feedback. In my daily interaction with teachers I also involve the female teachers, who are in the minority, and ensure equity in dealing with staff. As a female leader, I serve as a role model for female teachers and girls in the establishments where I work.

In my capacity as the gender resource person for the pedagogic in-service training program and teacher trainer, I train selected secondary school teachers (trainees) on gender and education to equip them with knowledge and social competences that promote gender sensitivity in their classrooms and even beyond. Thus, gender sensitivity is reproduced during trainings. These trainings contribute in creating gender awareness and reduces the education gender gap in the Protestant education system as trained personnel replicate the trainings in the establishments where they work. Thus, in my personal context, I contribute to close the gender gap by reproducing gender sensitivity in my teaching, teacher trainings, leadership and social life.

1.4 Research question

The context and the problem addressed in this study, constitute the bases for the formulation of the research question. The study seeks to address the problem of gender gap in teaching that impedes quality education in secondary schools of Cameroon. Thus, the question of how secondary school teachers perceive gender in their teaching is examined to explore their experiences and perceptions as a contribution to reduce the gender divide in teaching. To operationalise the main research question, the following sub-questions are formulated: (1) What is the understanding of gender by secondary school teachers? (2) How does the understanding of gender by secondary school teachers influence their classroom practice? (3) What strategies do secondary school teachers develop to address the gender related challenges they encounter in teaching?

1.5 Structure of the book

The framework of this book is differentiated into 6 chapters: the introduction, the state of research, methodology, findings, discussion of findings and the conclusion chapters. In the state of research (chapter 2), the literature and discourses by independent scholars and the international community regarding gender in education with a focus on teaching in the light of quality education are examined. Furthermore, analysing the gender gap in teaching and the connectivity to quality education becomes crucial in this chapter. In the methodology chapter (chapter 3) the qualitative methods, which include the semi-structured interview method of data collection and the descriptive method of data analysis, used in the study at hand are described. Meanwhile, the challenges encountered during the collection of data and the limitations of the study are also examined. The findings chapter (chapter 4) analyses the accumulated data and establishes a summary of the findings while synthesising the answers to the research questions. The discussion chapter (chapter 5) examines the findings in the light of the literature (chapter 2) to show the contribution of the study to educational science and re-echoes the answers to the research question. Finally, in the conclusion chapter (chapter 6) the research question and the answer obtained from the study are revisited. Meanwhile on the bases of the answer, implications for educational praxis and educational science are highlighted.

2.

TEACHERS' CLASSROOM PRACTICES FROM A GENDER PERSPECTIVE

The study at hand addresses the problem of the gender gap in teaching and this chapter articulates the reflection on the discourses and literature regarding gender and quality education with a focus on teachers' classroom practice. To this end, the literature review captures existing research in the light of praxis and the theoretical context, while linking the study to the scientific discourses at national and international levels. Meanwhile, the state of research further connects classroom practice and challenges encountered to the gender dimension of quality education. Thus, the understanding of the theoretical foundations and the conceptualization of the research topic becomes imperative.

2.1 The quality dimension of gender

Quality education is determined by teaching quality which has the greatest influence on learner outcome (Bregman, 2008, p. 10; Verspoor, 2008, p. 216). This is achieved by providing equal and equitable access, retention, participation and completion for all learners to develop

their full potential. This means that the teacher plays a key role in the attainment of quality education through classroom practice (Gauthier, 2004, p. 3). In this light, the teaching quality criteria becomes imperative and literature highlights six dimensions of teaching quality; effective classroom management, clarity of subject knowledge, high cognitive activation, good learning climate, effective forms of repetition and individual support (Scheerens, 2004, pp. 36, 42, 44). In addition, the notion of gender is also rooted in classroom justice, an indicator of a good learning climate. Thus, integrating gender sensitivity in the teaching quality criteria becomes crucial to address the gender gap in teaching. This means that teachers are gender sensitive and provide equal and equitable rights in; grading, distribution of rewards and sanctions, freedom of expression (Pretsch, et al., 2016, p. 121; Younger et al., 1999, p. 339), procedures for tasks distribution, participation in decision making (Ronnlund, 2014, p. 104) and resolving misunderstandings. In addition, gender sensitivity in asking and answering questions (Sunderland, 2000, p. 169), language use, individual students' support and constructive feedback are vital. This means that gender responsiveness in teachers' classroom practice assert the gender perspective of social justice which effect the learning climate, students' motivation, self-esteem, learner achievement and students' future perspectives (Kabeer, 2005, p. 17; Pretsch et al., 2016, p. 120). Furthermore, classroom justice assures students' sense of belonging and fosters social cohesion and motivation to learn (UNESCO, 2017a, p. 12; Verspoor, 2008, p. 6). Thus, boys and girls have equal and equitable learning space (UNESCO, 2017a, p. 19) which assures retention,

completion and better learner outcome. In this regard, all learners acquire the knowledge, skills and values for self-actualization and the development of individuals, families and the society (UNESCO, 2004, p. 30).

School leadership also plays an important role in establishing a school culture of gender equality and gender equity amongst teachers that enhances teaching quality (Daoust et al., 2012, p. 12). This is crucial to avoid a feeling of discrimination amongst male and female teachers and assure efficiency and effectiveness in their classroom practice (Daoust et al., 2012, p.12; Vespoor, 2008, p. 6). Thus, the pertinence of a gender sensitive leadership style that creates a positive school climate and enhances learning for all boys and girls and also motivates male and female teachers for teaching quality improvement.

2.2 Understanding the notion of gender and quality education

The reflection on teachers' classroom practice from a gender-quality perspective underscores the quality dimension of the study and is embedded in the understanding of the critical attributes of gender and quality education. In this section the discourse and literature on the understanding of gender and quality education become pertinent to provide a deeper understanding of the conceptual and theoretical foundations as well as the connectivity to each other and the topic of the study. Therefore, the description of gender, education, quality, and quality education are of the essence.

2.2.1 Gender

According to literature, gender is viewed from two perspectives; the linguistic and social context. From a linguistic perspective, gender delineates the sex of a person as either male or female (Sultana & Sohaimi bin Lazim, 2011, p. 170). However, other scholars view this as a misnomer and distinguish gender from sex (Claire, 2004, p. 13). Thus, gender and sex are two conflicting terms that need a clear understanding in the social science context. While gender is a social construct that determines the social relations between males and females which are changeable and vary depending on the context, sex is the biological identity of males and females connected to characteristics that do not change (Ifegbesan, 2010, p. 29; UNESCO, 2005, p. 4). This means that sex asserts the femininity or masculinity of an individual (Sultana & Sohaimi bin Lazim, 2011, p. 169). Meanwhile, the continuous twin classification of gender by society, emphasising the contrasts in males and females, promote gender stereotypes and strengthen how individuals perceive the divide (Ellemers, 2018, p. 277).

Furthermore, Claire (2004) asserts that gender refers to a social construction of how humans identify themselves and live as males and females which begins at an early age and becomes difficult to change, although it is changeable (p. 13). Lerner (1986) describes gender as an outfit, a veil and a straight coat which allows men and women to dance an asymmetric dance (p. 238). Ifegbesan (2010) conforms to describe gender as a social construct of male and female, considering social and cultural values and power relations (p. 29). She further asserts that these social constructs are

transmitted from one generation to another as the boys and girls are nurtured into men and women.

These constructions shape individual worldviews thus guiding the scope of career opportunities and the development of individuals and the society (Unal, et al., 2018, p. 43). In the light of the description of gender, the different scholars underscore its social construction that differentiates males from females in each society, which change over time. Thus, in the context of formal education, this gender divide shapes how boys and girls think, act and feel about themselves and the opposite sex regarding relationships, learning opportunities, interests and aspirations. Meanwhile, it also influences teachers' perceptions of boys and girls in their classroom practice (Ifegbesan, 2010, p. 30; Korenius, 2018, p. 27).

2.2.2 Education

According to literature, the description of education is broad and educationists approach it depending on their perceptions of life (Kumar & Ahmed, 2008, p. 3). In this light, Kumar and Ahmed (2008) describe education from two perspectives; the narrow and the broad perspective (p. 5). Fredriksson (2004) confirms Kumar & Ahmed's argument that the narrow perspective of education describes teaching and learning in an institution to develop social and cognitive competences for a successful life (Fredriksson, 2004, p. 3; Kumar & Ahmed, 2008, p. 4).

Kumar & Ahmed further opine that the narrow education described as formal education begins in the early childhood and continues to the university. At each systemic level, the state provides clear objectives and a curriculum, according

to the needs of the time, context and prospects of the society (Kumar & Ahmed, 2008, p.4). From a broader perspective, other scholars join Kumar and Ahmed (2008) to describe education as a life-long process of acquiring cognitive and social competences that shape one's reflections and actions (Brookfield, 2013, p. 10; Fredriksson, 2004, p. 5; Kumar & Ahmed, 2008, p. 4) in conformity with societal norms and takes place in non-formal and informal settings. However, education also refers to a discipline of study that deals with pedagogy (Fredriksson, 2004, p. 1). The topic under study consider all the perspectives of education due to their relevance and implication to the study.

2.2.3 Quality

Regarding quality, Fredriksson (2004) describes quality in relation to education as the embodiment of the value of learning outcomes and its relevance in the present and the future (p. 2). He further argues that the worth of education is described as quality education, although quality is complex to describe because of its dependence on the context, the time and the circumstances (Bregman, 2008, p. 45; Fredriksson, 2004, p. 4). In the case of formal education, research shows that the quality of education is determined by the input, process and output quality (UNESCO, 2014, p. 217) and the most influential in-put quality is teaching. Thus, teaching quality is evaluated through the learner achievement which determines quality education (Gauthier, 2004, pp. 8-9; UNESCO, 2014, p. 85). However, Fredriksson argues that apart from students' achievement the relevance, benefits and the usefulness of quality education in the contemporary and futuristic life is of the essence (Fredriksson, 2004, p. 4; MSI & EQUATE, 2008,

p. 7). For the purpose of the study at hand to investigate secondary school teachers' perceptions of gender in their classroom practice, the focus is on formal education at the secondary education level not undermining the societal influence.

2.2.4 Quality education

Quality education emphasizes the development of cognitive and social competences of the learners to reach their full potentials (UNESCO, 2004, p. 17) and reap the benefits therefrom. Thus, gender and quality education are linked to the reflection of deconstructing the social construct of the differentiation between males and females in the society and the provision of quality, equitable, affordable and equal access and learning opportunities to boys and girls. Through this action, a contribution is made to reduce the gender educational gap and enhance quality education (Verspoor, 2008, p. 215).

2.3 Gender-related terminologies and classroom practices

In this part of the literature review, reflecting on gender-related terminologies form the bases of the understanding of gender by secondary school teachers to enhance the conscious and confident implementation of a gender responsive classroom practice. For the purpose of this study the following gender related terminologies are considered; gender role, gender stereotype, gender equality, gender equity, gender relations and gender sensitivity.

2.3.1 Gender role

According to literature, gender roles describe a pattern of attitude and behaviour of males different from females, socially constructed through practice, beliefs and traditions that influence how they interact and peoples' expectations of the roles (Ifegbesan, 2010, p. 29; Mlama et al., 2005, p. 1). These roles which are changeable, are learned and practiced from birth to adulthood, (Sultana & Sohaimi bin Lazim, 2011, p. 170). For instance, in the community where I come from, parents assign cooking, childcare and hoeing the fields to girls. Meanwhile, splitting wood and clearing grass in the fields is the preserve for boys. Thus, gender roles are a consequence of individual experiences within the social context (Mutekwe et al., 2013 p. 311) which permeate learning institutions and influences students and teachers' interactions in and out of classroom. These roles define students' needs and interest and also shape their worldview of opportunities and life choices (Unal et al., 2018, p. 43).

2.3.2 Gender stereotype

Literature shows that gender stereotype reflects the socially constructed expectations of males and females in a society. It accentuates not only the differences between males and females but also assigns attitudes and behaviours for males and females, which become gender roles (Mlama et al., 2005, p. 1; Ellemers, 2018, p. 276). Meanwhile, gender stereotyping leads to dangerous masculinity, a situation in which males assume dominance, self-support and resilience. This constrains and impedes males' freedom to make informed choices and take informed decisions about their own life aspirations (Phoenix, 2004, p. 35; Unal et al., 2018, p. 43; Younger et al., 1999, p. 339).

For instance, society constrains men to be strong, hide their feelings, provide for the family and be domineering. Therefore, they implement “doing men” or “doing boys” and suffer under the weight of being strong, even when they are not (Phoenix, 2004, p. 33). Meanwhile, gender stereotypes also perpetuate differences in the treatment of males and females (Ellemers, 2018, p. 276; Eriksson, Smith & Smith, 2017, p. 5). For instance, splitting wood by males and cooking by females are stereotypes in my local context and any attempt to change the roles, is against peoples’ expectations. Ifegbesan (2010) identifies three types of gender stereotypes that permeate society; self-stereotype, school-based stereotype and family/societal stereotype (Ifegbesan, 2010, p. 29).

Self-stereotype involves conforming, yielding and subjecting to the societal construct of the stereotype (Eriksson, Smith & Smith, 2017, p. 5; Mutekwe, 2013, p. 312; Raghav Seema & Merlin, 2014, p. 73). For example, in my local context, individual females yield to societies’ expectation that only males split wood. School-based stereotype emanates from the school culture and pedagogies (Ifegbesan, 2010, p. 36; Kabeer, 2005, p. 17) that enforce the gender differentiation between students (boys and girls) and teachers (male and females). For instance, in schools where mostly girls study Home Economics as a subject, boys retreat from it, for fear of stigmatization even if they are interested. Meanwhile, family/societal gender stereotypes begin from birth as the family ascribes different roles, responsibilities and behaviours to boys and girls as culture demands (Agyepong, 2001, pp. 6-7; Ellemers, 2018, p. 280).

For instance, in my local context, families nurture girls for marriage and boys to provide for the family. Thus, gender stereotypes shape the impressions, reflections and actions of males and females while defining their life choices (Ellemers, 2018, p.277; Sultana & Sohaimi bin Lazim, 2011, p. 171). In the same vein, teachers (males and females) and students (boys and girls) import these gender stereotypes into schools and classrooms which guide their attitudes and behaviours towards each other and influences their world views, relationships, needs, interests and life aspirations (Unal et al., 2018, p. 43).

2.3.3 Gender equality

According to research, gender equality articulates the provision of equal opportunities to boys, girls, men and women to contribute and participate in the society while having access, control and also benefit from the available resources (MIS & EQUATE, 2008, p. 5; UNESCO, 2005, p. 4). Gender equality is of great concern to the international community due to the realization of the necessity for women and girls to participate in their own development for individual benefits and that of the society (Brookfield, 2013, p. 7). Regarding education, gender equality is a challenge as boys and girls do not have equal opportunities to access, retention, achievement and completion of secondary education in sub-Saharan Africa and Cameroon in particular (Daoust et al., 2012, p. 12).

Furthermore, gender equality in education does not only involve equal protection of students' rights and obligations but encompasses reflecting on how boys, men, women and girls manifest their roles and responsibilities in schools and classrooms and the effect on school social relationships

and classroom practice (p.12). Besides, gender equality can only be achieved by paying attention to individual students' access, learning and outcome to ascertain equal and equitable learning opportunities (Claire, 2004, p. 6). Thus, gender sensitivity in school interaction and classroom practice provides equal learning opportunities, enhancing gender equality and reflecting quality education (Daoust et al., 2012, p.12).

2.3.4 Gender equity

According to research gender equity describes fairness in the treatment of boys, girls, women, men, while responding to individual needs and interests (Mlama et al., 2005, p. 1; MIS & EQUATE, 2008, p. 6; UNESCO, 2005, p. 4). This means that in teachers' classroom practice, gender equity allows social justice and individual support to ensure boys and girls attainment of the same level of participation, retention, completion and achievement. Meanwhile, equity irrespective of gender is also relevant in classroom practice to assure meritocracy (Berti, Molinari & Speltini, 2010, p. 543). Thus, equity emphasizes differentiation unlike equality which emphasizes sameness (MIS & EQUATE, 2008, p. 6).

2.3.5 Gender relations

According to literature, gender relations underscore the social relations between men, boys, women and girls (Mlama et al., 2005, p. 1; Sultana & Sohaimi bin Lazim, 2011, p. 170) and are rooted in how people view themselves and the opposite sex. To this end, depending on the context and culture, gender relations most often relegate women and girls leading to unequal power relations which

affect the family, institutions and the society (Sultana & Sohaimi bin Lazim, 2011, p. 170). Therefore, the influence of gender power imbalance affects teachers' classroom practice and students' interactions and perceptions of the opposite sex. In this light, the empowerment of women and girls becomes relevant to enhance equal power relations and also promotes autonomy and responsibility for the females to take informed decisions and make informed choices about their lives (Kabeer, 2005, p. 16). Thus, sensitization and structural modifications to improve school and classroom interactions amongst teachers, between teachers and students as well as amongst boys and girls become pertinent to realise equal power relations (Monkman, 2018, p. 197) and promote social cohesion and a positive school climate that enhances learning.

2.3.6 Gender sensitivity

According to research, gender sensitivity describes consciousness about gender biases (Mlama et al., 2005, p. 1). This means that gender sensitivity becomes pertinent in teachers' classroom practice, for the implementation of gender responsive pedagogy, which ensures equality and equitability of boys and girls learning interactions, actions, decision making and learner outcome (Daoust et al., 2012, p. 46; Raghav et al., 2014, p. 1). Meanwhile, the teacher's role in creating gender awareness to the students about cultural values, gender stereotypes and patriarchal systems that influence students' worldviews and self-image becomes crucial (Francis, 2004, p. 47; Korenius, 2018, p. 27). Thus, gender sensitive classrooms provide adequate opportunities for boys and girls learning and contributes to reducing the gender gap in teaching (Daoust et al., p. 12; Raghav et al., 2014, p. 1).

2.4 Understanding gender in teaching

The reflection on the influence of the understanding of gender on teachers' classroom practice seeks to explore the state of research regarding teachers' gender sensitivity in their teaching. According to research, the gender gap in teaching results in part from the lack of understanding of the influence of gender in teachers' classroom practice (Ombati & Ombati, 2012, p. 128). In this light, the gender inequalities and gender inequities that create a gender educational gap are reflected in teachers' classroom practices in various facets. Some of which include, classroom gender stereotyping, oral communication, learning resources, role models, curriculum, teaching and learning process, teacher-student interaction, lesson participation and academic achievement and also safe school environment (Mutekwe et al., 2013, p. 307).

2.4.1 Gender stereotyping in the classroom

According to research, gender stereotyping in teachers' classroom practice impedes gender equality and gender equity (Korenius, 2018, p. 15; Ifegbesan, 2010, p. 36). Imported from homes and society, (Agyepong, 2001, pp. 6-7; Ellemers, 2018, p. 280) gender stereotypes permeate into schools and classrooms. In this light, they influence male and female teachers and boys' and girls' self-image and attitudes as well as their world views, needs, interests and life aspirations (Mutekwe et al., 2013, p. 316; Unal et al., 2018, p. 43). Research further shows that due to gender stereotypes, teachers differentiate in the treatment of boys and girls in the classroom (Francis, 2004, p. 44; Younger et al., 1999, p. 338). For example, teachers' pay more attention to the male students than the female

students (Kabeer, 2005, p. 17), although other scholars argue that more attention is given due to their disruptive behaviours (Francis, 2004, p. 45; Younger et al., 1999, p. 339). Meanwhile, research also shows that most female students study humanities and language while male students study science and mathematics (Fielding, 2014, p. 133; Mutekwe et al., 2013, p. 316; McClure et al., 2017, p. 13). This means that gender stereotypes impede male and female students' opportunities and freedom of life choices. On another score, research shows that due to gender stereotyping males and females are ascribed different roles and responsibilities. While female students undertake subservient roles of domestication, care-giving, and sharing, males assume superior positions of leadership in the classroom (Fielding, 2014, p. 4; Sakki et al., 2010, p. 71). Furthermore, research shows that males are considered strong, aggressive and active, while females are weak, passive and composed. In this light, these gender stereotypes constrain boys and girls to comply to societies expectations (Francis, 2004, p. 43) and influence their thinking, feeling and actions (Francis, 2004, p. 42; Ifegbesan, 2010, p. 29) which often lead to dangerous masculinity in males (Younger et al., 1999, p. 339).

Meanwhile, research further shows that teachers contribute in enforcing gender stereotype in their classroom practice (Korenienus, 2018, p. 16) due to ignorance and their own background. On this score, teachers' awareness on breaking gender stereotypes provides a learning environment that offsets the typical traditional gender roles and creates non-stereotypic learning opportunities for boys and girls (Mutekwe et al., 2013, p. 317; Unal

et al., 2018, p. 43). Thus, the pertinence of teachers' understanding regarding gender, to adequately address gender stereotypes in teaching (Mlama et al., 2005, p. 1).

2.4.2 Oral communication

Research shows that communication is an important instrument in the teaching and learning process (Gachukia & Chung, 2005, p. 28). However, when not appropriately used it enforces gender stereotype and leads to gender discrimination (Mlama, 2005, p. 14). In the light of oral communication which describes verbal interaction, scholars argue that teachers and students use gender bias language that discriminates against one sex or the other, instead of gender neutral language that encourages and values both sexes equally in the classroom (Ifegbesan, 2010, p. 36; Unal et al., 2018, p. 35).

For instance, a teacher who expressly communicates to a female student of her incapability to offer sciences, enforces gender stereotypes and creates the impression that science is a preserve for males. Such instances shape the mentality of boys and girls, influencing their self-esteem and self-concept relative to others and toward subject choices and carrier opportunities in life (Kabeer, 2005, p. 17; Unal et al., 2018, p. 35). Therefore, according to literature, teachers' use of gender neutral or gender sensitive words that avoids bias (p. 30) become crucial. For instance, the use of the word "man" referring to men and women is gender biased. But using "humanity" makes it inclusive and neutral. Otherwise specifying men and women to recognise both sexes is gender sensitive. Furthermore, gender sensitivity or gender neutrality in addressing professions is crucial to enhance gender equality. For

instance, using “police officer” is preferred to “policeman” or “policewoman”. Also, the use of “actor” for both male and female is preferred to “actor” for male and “actress” for female. It is argued that the position is what matters and not whether it is held by male or female (Gachukia & Chung, 2005, p. 54). Therefore, the understanding of gender sensitivity, enables teachers to avoid implicit or explicit gender bias language in society and in the classroom. (Mlama et al., 2005, p. 14; Korenius, 2018, p. 10; Mutekwe et al., 2013, p. 316). In addition teachers are equipped with the capacity to educate and sensitize students on the importance of avoiding denigrating language based on gender stereotype (Korenius, 2018, p. 30). This assures a sense of belonging, recognition and value for both boys and girls in the classroom, thus enhancing gender equality, teaching quality and the education quality.

2.4.3 Learning resources

Gachukia and Chung (2005) describe learning resources as tools used by teachers to immortalize concepts, arouse interest and call the attention of student to facilitate the understanding and retention of the subject content (p.36). They also ascertain the influence of learning resources on students thinking, actions and life ambitions (p.51). However, literature shows that for the most part learning resources are gender bias and enforce gender stereotypes (Gachukia & Chung, 2005, p.51; Mutekwe et al., 2013, p.316). Sunderland in contrast argues that, the textbooks reflect the reality on the ground. These learning resources, which include textbooks, charts, media, pictures and posters, (Gachukia & Chung, 2005, p.37) are largely gender bias. For instance, textbooks

for the most part in sub-Saharan Africa depict females in subservient, passive and denigrating roles like house wives, care givers, house servants and office secretaries. Meanwhile, males are portrayed in influential and active roles like teachers, medical doctors, engineers, politicians and scientists with its negative impact on the learners and their future perspectives (Gachukia & Chung, 2005, p. 26; Sunderland, 2000, p. 152).

Meanwhile, gender sensitivity becomes crucial for textbooks writers to consciously project males and females in non-stereotypic roles (Gachukia & Chung, 2005, p. 55). In the same vein, choosing textbooks that are gender sensitive and also adapting gender bias textbooks (Sunderland, 2000, p. 152) in the teaching and learning process become pertinent. Thus, the understanding of gender enables teachers to select gender sensitive learning resources that promote equal and equitable learning opportunities that raise boys' and girls' self-esteem and motivation to learn (Gachukia & Chung, 2005, p. 53).

2.4.4 Role models

According to discourse, role models constitute an important aspect in gender and quality education. Boys and girls are influenced by individuals, positions and occupations, that are of interests to them (Daoust et al., 2012, p. 60; Unal et al., 2018, p. 43). In this direction, the society, family, media and education systems provide role models to boys and girls. However, the role models align with the societal construct which portrays boys in superior roles and females in inferior roles (Agyepong, 2001, pp. 6-7; Ifegbesan, 2010, p. 36). Thus, role models in non-stereotypic roles become important to break gender stereotypes. For example, in

the context of Cameroon, role models of female scientists enable boys and girls to understand that both boys and girls can become scientists. Also, the presence of female teachers in secondary schools and in leadership positions encourages and motivates female and male students to realise that females can become teachers and also leaders, not only in primary education but also at the secondary education level. Meanwhile, boys and girls feel safe and learn better in schools where there are female teachers (Daoust et al., 2012, p. 20; UNESCO, 2014, p. 77). Thus, the understanding of gender enlightens on how the society defines roles and responsibilities that limit opportunities for males and females (Unal et al., 2018, p. 43). This awareness reshapes teachers' reflections on their own classroom gender sensitivity and encourages them to become change agents capable of deconstructing society's gender biases (Claire, 2004, p. 13; Ifegbesan, 2010, p. 29; UNESCO, 2005, p. 1). Furthermore, the awareness equips male and female teachers, to consciously discuss with students, issues of non-stereotypic roles, responsibilities, and professions. This also helps to break gender stereotypes (Raghav et al., 2014, p. 1; Unal et al., 2018, p. 43), and improve on the gender perspective of quality education.

2.4.5 Curriculum

According to literature, in sub-Saharan Africa, most of the curricula reflect the social construct with its biases against the female folk embedded in the colonial construction of education (Agyepong, 2001, pp. 31-32; Fielding, 2014, p. 2; Gachukia & Chung, 2005, p. 26; UNESCO, 2015, p. 40). In this light, scholars assert the enforcement of unequal

gender relations in the curriculum which projects males and suppress females. In the same vein, the differentiation in the attribution of professions or roles to males and females in the curriculum, contributes to the gender bias against the females (Fielding, 2014, p. 2; Kabeer, 2005, p. 17). For instance, in the context of sub-Saharan Africa, males are represented as medical doctors and females as nurses or males are represented in white collar jobs and females as housewives and childcare-givers (Fielding, 2014, p. 2; Mutekwe et al., 2013, p. 316). This has a negative influence on girls' learning, their completion of schooling and future perspectives.

Meanwhile, Agyepong (2001) and Francis (2004) also underscore the role of the hidden curriculum in enforcing gender bias either subtly or visibly through gender power relations in the school and classroom (Agyepong, 2001, p. 13; Francis, 2004, p. 46). For instance, male students assume leadership positions of class prefects and monitors, while female students are assistants and engage more in domestic aspects of the classroom. In the same vein, the hierarchical school and classroom setting sends a subtle message about gender power relations, a manifestation of the hidden curriculum (Daoust et al., 2012, p. 12; Gachukia & Chung, 2005, p. 26). To this end, teachers' awareness of the gender biases in the covert and overt curriculum and also adapting lessons to assure gender responsiveness become crucial, (UNESCO, 2015, p. 40). In addition creating gender awareness for teachers and school leaders to reshape school and classroom practices becomes pertinent to eliminate the gender gap in teaching for school quality improvement.

2.4.6 Teaching and learning process

According to research, the teaching process involves teaching and learning which interconnect for effective learner outcome (Gachukia & Chung, 2005, pp. 30-33). Empirical evidence shows that teachers engage in teaching practices that perpetuate gender inequality and gender inequity in boys' and girls' learning (Daoust et al., 2012, p. 10; Phoenix, 2004, p. 35). According to literature, teachers apply teaching methods that elicit gender biases which affect learners' self-esteem and motivation to learn (Daoust et al., 2012, p. 10; Gachukia & Chung, 2005, p. 31). This bias becomes visible when most teachers do not give male and female students the same learning opportunities during classroom activities. For instance, asking and answering questions, storytelling, debates, role plays, excursions, organizing group work activities, demonstrations and illustrations (Gachukia & Chung, 2005, pp. 31-34).

Therefore, teachers need to design gender responsive learning activities that offer boys and girls full participation while exchanging gender stereotypic roles in the learning process (Raghav et al., 2014, p. 10; Sunderland, 2000, p. 161). Such designs boost the self-image of all learners who are motivated to actively take part in unconventional roles, which create a change in the mentality of boys and girls. However, teachers' lack of adequate cognitive and social competences to manage classroom plurality impedes the implementation of gender equality and gender equity in the teaching and learning process (UNESCO, 2017a, p. 18). Thus, teachers' awareness about a gender sensitive classroom, equips them to provide equal and equitable

learning opportunities for students to acquire knowledge, skills and attitudes that lead to self-actualization (Gachukia & Chung, 2005, p. 36).

2.4.7 Teacher-student interactions in and out of classroom

Literature shows that, teachers do not only interact with students in the classroom but also informally out of the classroom. The out of the classroom relationship influences the learning interaction (Daoust et al., 2012, p. 48). This means that teachers' individual perceptions and experiences with male and female students influence how they interact with them both in and out of their classroom (ibid).

Regarding out of classroom interactions, literature reveals that students approach teachers depending on the aura the teacher creates and how the teachers deal with challenges students present (Claessens et al., 2017, p. 478). Furthermore, studies indicate a cordial relationship between male teachers and female students, whom male teachers consider as being respectful and more focused in the classroom (Phoenix, 2004, p. 43; Younger et al., 1999, p. 339). This image accompanies male teachers even out of the classroom to treat female students with more care than the male students whom for the most part, both male and female teachers consider as disruptive (Daoust et al., 2012, p. 49; Phoenix, 2004, p. 36). Furthermore, research reveals that female teachers, although generally caring, interact more with male students out of the classroom but this interaction also depends on the openness of the female teachers (Daoust et al., 2012, p. 49). Meanwhile, both male

and female students have female teachers as role models since both boys and girls feel safe with female teachers, due to students' perception of mother characteristics in the female teachers (Daoust et al., 2012, p. 49).

Also, according to studies, tensions and conflicts ensue between female teachers and female students, especially the adolescent girls who become conscious about their gender identity at maturation and exhibit disrespect when embarrassed publicly (Mlama et al., 2005, p. 23). In the same vein, studies also shows that tensions exist between male and female students due to the innate tendency of male students to display physical strength, dominance and aggressiveness, embedded in dangerous masculinity (Phoenix, 2004, p. 43). Meanwhile, conflicts also ensue between male teachers and female students and teachers. The male teachers perpetrate gender-based violence in the form of bullying, sexual harassments and sexual exploitation of female students and female teachers (Daoust et al., 2012, p. 49; UNICEF, 2011, p. 31). Furthermore, literature reveals the unavailability of female teachers who leave school immediately after their lessons for matrimonial duties (Daoust et al., 2012, p. 49), and thus are less available to attend to girls' and boys' psychosocial needs (ibid) out of the classroom. This situation reveals the gender differentiations of interactions between males and females and enforces the gender divide with implications on students learning and teachers' classroom practice (ibid).

In the case of interacting with students in the classroom, teachers for the most part are ignorant of the effect of their attitudes and behaviours on students' learning and

outcome (Kabeer, 2005, p. 17; Tanyi, 2016, pp. 212-213). Most teachers enforce gender inequality and inequity through verbal and non-verbal communication in the classroom (Raghav et al., 2014, p. 31; Younger et al., 1999, p. 339). This means that, through classroom interaction, teachers may unconsciously reinforce the gender gap in teaching. For instance, differentiation of boys and girls in grading, distribution of rewards, sanctions, and freedom of expression (Pretsch et al., 2016, p. 121; Younger et al., 1999, p. 339), tasks distribution, participation in decision making (Ronnlund, 2014, p. 104), individual support, feedback, and participation in asking and answering questions (Sunderland, 2000, p. 169). This differentiation affects learners' self-esteem and the overall classroom learning climate and learner achievement (Mutekwe et al., 2013, p. 307; Pretsch et al., 2016, p. 120).

In the same vein, students' attitudes also contribute in the gender divide as peers ensure the reproduction of gender roles (Francis, 2004, pp. 43, 45). This affects girls' and boys' self-esteem and also creates an unsafe learning environment for learners who attempt to act otherwise. Therefore, teachers' understanding of gender instils the appropriate character and behaviour that permits them to interact better with students and colleagues, both males and females. Meanwhile, the teachers change of attitude influences students' perceptions of male and female teachers, since the students look up to teachers as their role models (Daoust et al., 2012, p. 27; Unal et al., 2018, p. 43). Thus, investigating teachers' perceptions of gender in their own teaching becomes crucial due to the impact of their perceptions on students' learning and the quality of education (Claessens et al., 2017, p. 478).

2.4.8 Lesson participation and academic achievement

According to literature, teachers' differentiation of boys and girls in lesson participation and academic performance, influences the students' learning outcome (UNESCO, 2015, p. 40; Younger et al., 1999, p. 338). Although some literature shows that when women and girls in sub-Saharan Africa have access to education they lag in retention, participation, completion and achievement (Daoust et al., 2012, p. 9), other studies reveal keen competition between boys and girls with little or no disparity (UNESCO, 2015, p. 12). However, other studies reveal the increasing lag and low academic performance of boys compared to girls (Phoenix, 2004, p. 35; UNESCO, 2015, p. 44; Younger, 1999, p. 339). They argue that boys spend less time doing assignments, show less interest in reading and consider schooling as not important (UNESCO, 2015, p. 44). Furthermore, Francis (2004, p. 35) and Younger et al. (1999, p. 339) assert the low academic performance of boys, who are more self-sufficient and competitive rather than collaborative as girls do and support each other (Phoenix, 2004, p. 43; Younger et al., p. 339). Thus, the understanding of the differences between boys and girls response to learning and the implication for teachers become crucial to enable teachers develop strategies to motivate boys and increase their participation and learner outcome, while encouraging girls to keep up in the spirit of collaboration and seeking assistance that enhances their success in learning (Younger et al., 1999. p. 339).

2.4.9 Safe school environment

Literature shows that gender equality and gender equity in quality education encompass a supportive, safe,

conducive, and inclusive learning environment (Monkman, 2018, p. 207; Saito, 2011, p. 1; WHO, 2019, p. 35). This is vital to enhance access, retention, completion, and quality learner outcome to assure quality education (Daoust et al., 2012, p. 35; Raghav et al., 2014, p. 81). Science reveals that, in sub-Saharan Africa, girls for the most part experience challenges of managing menstruation due to lack of water, toilet facilities and privacy (Mlama et al., 2005, p. 22; Korenius, 2018, p. 9). These experiences challenge the girls, some of whom feel unsafe attending school during such periods (Daoust et al., 2012, p. 47). Meanwhile, teachers' intimidating attitudes and responses to boys' and girls' specific challenges like lateness to school, absenteeism, lack of basic learning resources, health needs and family issues, discourage and demotivate them and possibly leads to low-self-esteem and dropout (Daoust et al., 2012, p. 47; Mlama et al., 2005, p. 19).

Furthermore, research shows that sexual harassment and bullying perpetuated by the males on females creates an insecure learning environment (Korenius, 2018, p. 10; UNESCO, 2015, p. 45) with females for the most part experiencing physical and psychological gender-based violence which affects the female affective and cognitive development (Daoust et al., 2012, p. 35). Therefore, the lack of understanding of gender by teachers limits their ability to create safe school classrooms through their classroom practice. Thus, gender awareness creation provides teachers with the opportunity to reflect on their attitudes and behaviours towards students' individual social challenges and seek appropriate solutions that support and motivate boys and girls to feel protected to learn (Korenius, 2018, p. 38; WHO, 2019, p. 35). The

discourse on the influence of the understanding of gender in teachers' classroom practice, is therefore rooted in the implementation of a gender sensitive pedagogy. This encompasses the teachers' criticality about gender stereotypes, avoidance of gender stereotypic language and the adaptation of the learning content and resources. Furthermore, gender neutrality or gender sensitivity, insurance of a safe learning environment and providing equal learning opportunities and access to learning aids (Korenius, 2018, p. 16; Saito, 2011, p. 1; UNESCO, 2014, p. 77) become crucial. In the same vein, ensuring that teachers respond to students' individual cognitive and psychosocial needs while preparing them for a wide range of non-stereotypic opportunities and life aspirations is of the essence. However, literature shows that gender sensitive pedagogy remains a challenge to teachers due to lack of training, follow-up and supervision (Daoust et al., 2012, p. 50; Korenius, 2018, p. 17).

2.5 Challenges regarding gender and mitigations

According to research, the gender-related challenges teachers encounter hinder the effective implementation of gender sensitive pedagogy (Daoust et al., 2012, p. 52). These challenges influence the teaching and learning process, thus affecting the learner outcome and the quality of education. As described in the literature review, some of the challenges include management of adolescents, intimate relationships, and gender-based violence. To overcome these challenges, literature shows that life skills education becomes pertinent. According to science, life skills education encompasses the development of psychosocial and cognitive competences that establish

healthy relationships, interactions and effective communication to avoid weeping up emotions and conflicts (WHO, 2019, p. 24; Wood et al., 2015, p. 672).

2.5.1 Management of adolescents

Adolescence in the human life cycle describes a developmental stage which begins at puberty, a period when secondary sexual characteristics begin to develop and cause individuals to become conscious of who they are. (McNeely & Blanchard, 2009, p. 4; UNICEF, 2011, p. 8) This is also described as gender identity (Mlama et al., 2005, pp. 22-23). Meanwhile, the onset of puberty varies with individuals and between boys and girls. It largely falls within but is not limited to the second decade of the human life cycle (UNICEF, 2011, p. 12). However, according to the United Nations, adolescence spans from 10-19 years (p. 8) and those within this age group are adolescents or teenagers. From literature, one of the gender-related challenges secondary school teachers encounter is embedded in managing adolescents in their classroom practice (Anderman & Sinatra, 2009, p. 3). Adolescents have hormone driven peculiarities that influence their thoughts (Mlama et al., 2005, p. 22) about their self-image or gender identity; maleness or femaleness (Wood & Eagly, 2009, p.109).

This situation becomes a challenge for boys and girls, as protecting the identity manifests in different ways and meets with resistance and contempt from adults who for the most part are parents and teachers (Curtis, 2015, p. 27; UNESCO, 2018, p. 22). In this light, the manifestations vary and initiate aggressiveness in some adolescents when embarrassed publicly (Mlama et al., 2005, p. 22;

UNESCO, 2018, p. 2). Thus, the understanding of the biological changes that manifest differently in individuals and uniquely in boys and in girls becomes crucial for parents and teachers to better interact and relate with adolescents. Although adolescents need support and assistance from the society, especially parents and teachers, to navigate successfully through adolescence, most teachers aggravate the situation by their actions and reactions (UNESCO, 2018, p. 12; UNICEF, 2011, p. 2) causing the students to react in self-protection of an identity which is most cherished by them.

From literature, life skill education and gender sensitive management provide a foundation for overcoming in part the gender related challenges teachers experience in teaching (Daoust et al., 2012, p. 47 ; Mlama et al., 2005, p. 19). In this regard, Raufelder, (2014) affirms that individual students (boys and girls) have different motivations, aspirations and approaches to situations. This compels teachers to take appropriate dispositions to ensure the psychosocial wellbeing of the learners (pp.174-175). Therefore, the appreciation and implementation of life skills by students and teachers create a positive school climate that motivates all learners to learn, thus improving on the learners' outcome (Scheerens, 2004, p. 42) and bridging the gender gap in teaching between boys and girls.

2.5.2 Romantic relationships

Romantic relationships describe situations in which individuals engaged in dating and intimate relationships that lead to sexual contact (UNICEF, 2011, p. 22). To this end, adolescents experience natural stimulations that urge them into such relationships (McNeely & Blanchard,

2009, p. 15). According to science, teachers encounter the challenge of dealing with romantic relationships between male students and female students and between male teachers and female students, (Daoust, et al., 2012, p. 35; Mlama, et al., 2005, p. 22). These relationships are a challenge to teachers because these students become distracted from learning, leading to reduced academic performance (Mlama et al., 2005, p. 22). Furthermore, such relationships involve risky health behaviours besides dating and intimate partner violence (WHO, 2019, p. 26) with consequences of strained relationships, dropout due to ill health, pregnancy or death in the course of unsafe abortion (UNICEF, 2011, p. 22). On the other hand, the romantic relationships between male teachers and female students, influenced by gender power relations, could be considered as sexual exploitation with huge negative consequences on the female students learning (Mlama et al., 2005, p. 22; UNICEF, 2011, p. 22).

2.5.3 Gender-based violence

Gender-based violence (GBV) describes acts of physical, psychosocial, or sexual violations perpetuated because of gender stereotypes or gender norms and enforced by gendered power relations (Daoust et al., 2012, p. 35). Meanwhile, science indicates that, gender-based violence could be verbal, physical, emotional, or sexual and it does exist in families, educational institutions, and in the community (UNICEF, 2011, p. 31). These acts of violence are exacerbated by the unequal power relations of males and females in the society (Sultana & Sohaimi bin Lazim, 2011, p. 168). Furthermore, research shows that victims do not speak out due to cultural values (Daoust

et al., 2012, p. 36) that instil fear of stigmatization from the society. This becomes a serious problem that affects classroom practice because gender based violence lowers victims' self-esteem, reduces productivity, and makes the environment unsafe for teaching and learning (Daoust et al., 2012, p. 35; Korenius, 2018, p. 10).

To overcome this challenge, life skill education of teachers and students to challenge gender norms and stereotypes relating to gender-based violence and also how to identify exploitative relationships that breed dating and intimate partner violence becomes crucial (Daoust et al., 2012, p. 36; Sakki et al., 2010, p. 75; WHO, 2019, p. 26). In addition, preventing gender-based violence, exposing incidences of violence to authorities to take appropriate measures and encouraging victims to speak up and get assistance (Daoust et al., 2012, p. 36; WHO, 2019, p. 32) becomes essential. Furthermore, the sensitization of individuals on their rights and obligations about gender-based violence becomes pertinent (Reichert, 1998, p. 374). These strategies foster safety in schools and classrooms and provides a better learning climate that assures retention, completion and quality learner outcome.

2.6 Conclusion

This literature review provides relevant and adequate information to address the conceptual and theoretical background of gender and quality education from a gender perspective. This review shows that apart from teachers' classroom practice, other factors contribute to the education gender gap. Furthermore, it reveals that although little progress has been made in reducing the gender gap in teaching, patriarchy, cultural values

and gender, stereotypes (Fielding, 2014, p. 2) persist and hinder the progress in bridging the gap. Meanwhile, gender bias teaching in all its dimensions characterizes the school culture and classroom practice in Cameroon and sub-Saharan Africa (Mutekwe et al., 2013, p. 317; Ombati & Ombati, 2012, p. 128; UNESCO, 2015, p. 40) bringing to the limelight the inadequacy of the teaching quality and the existence of the gender gap in teaching in favour of males. Literature further indicates teachers' lack of training, supervision, follow-up and evaluation as contributing to the gender bias in teachers' classroom practice and proposes teacher professional development from a gender perspective backed by adequate policies that ensure implementation (Daoust et al., 2012, p. 62; Sultana & Sohaimi bin Lazim, 2011 p. 173; Unal et al., 2018, p. 43). Therefore, through training and follow-up teachers become gender sensitive, provide equal and equitable opportunities to boys and girls and ensure, retention, full participation, completion and improved learner achievement.

From the literature review it is evident that research could be conducted to investigate students' perceptions of gender and its impact on learners' achievement. Also, research could be conducted to compare the effect of romantic relationships on boys' and girls' academic performance in the context of sub-Saharan Africa. Meanwhile, the study at hand investigates secondary school teachers' perceptions of gender in their own teaching to address the gender gap in teaching. This study provides a knowledge base on gender and education in the Cameroon context and contributes to education quality, rooted in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) 4 on education and 5 on gender equality and women's empowerment (UNESCO, 2016, p.7).

3.

METHODOLOGY

The problem of the gender gap in teaching in the Cameroon education system underscores the pertinence to explore the perceptions of secondary school teachers' classroom practice regarding gender. This investigation provides an insight of the practice and asserts the teaching quality from a gender perspective as a contribution to enhancing educational quality. Thus, the methodology is grounded on the theoretical background and the conceptual framework of this study, which seeks to inquire how secondary school teachers perceive gender in their teaching. To operationalise the study, the question of the understanding of gender by secondary school teachers, the influence of the understanding of gender in teaching, gender related challenges and the mitigating measures were explored using the qualitative research design in which semi-structured interviews were conducted to collect data and the descriptive method was used to analyse the data. In addition, the sample, the challenges and the limitations of the study are also described.

3.1 Qualitative research approach

The theoretical and conceptual understanding of the study at hand requires the qualitative research approach to explore the experiences and perceptions of gender

in the classroom practice of secondary school teachers in the Cameroon context. According to literature, this research approach is a form of social study carried out in various disciplines and fields of life, to systematically explore the social occurrences and understand the social reality (Savin-Baden & Major, 2013, p. 3). Meanwhile, Krugger (2010) argues that qualitative research seeks to understand the world view of individuals, how they attribute meaning to daily experiences and how they interpret social reality from daily social interactions (p. 42). In this light, individual perceptions of the world influence thinking and are shaped by the living environment (Savin-Baden & Major, 2013, p. 5). Alshenqeeti (2014) on his part acknowledges that qualitative researchers seek to explore the varied perceptions and experiences of human beings and how they construct meaning from their own understanding of situations, concepts and reality in their own context (p. 39). Therefore, a holistic understanding of the social interactions, perception and experiences of secondary school teachers regarding gender and the complexity and diversity of their experiences become pertinent (Krugger, 2010, p. 41).

In this qualitative research approach, the researcher's personal stance (Savin-Baden & Major, 2013, p. 68) towards the study is embedded in passion and advocacy for gender equality in the society, school culture and classroom practice. This influences the values and preferences of the research and shapes the reflection and perspectives on how the research is pursued (ibid). Meanwhile, the tradition adopted is phenomenology, a qualitative research design in which researchers seek to investigate the lived experiences and the understanding of a concept by individuals and wish to derive a common

understanding from their experiences (ibid., p. 215).

Thus, by giving an in-depth description of the lived experience regarding a phenomenon, researchers ensure that facts are not distorted. In the study at hand the phenomenon is gender, and the researcher seeks to understand how secondary school teachers perceive gender in their own teaching. In addition, constructivism serves as the research paradigm, for this study. According to research, constructivism describes the social reality of human's mental construct which provides meaning to experiences, perspectives, and ideas (ibid., p. 63). Literature also shows that the mental construct may be true or untrue and maybe right or wrong (Guba & Lincoln, 1994, p. 108). This means that constructivists acknowledge subjectivity in qualitative research as an opportunity to have a holistic in-depth understanding of people's perspectives and also of the uniqueness of the phenomenon under study (Patton, 2002, p. 267-268). Gender is described as a social construct, hence this approach appears to be appropriate. (Claire, 2004, p. 9; Mutekwe et al., 2013, p. 310; UNESCO, 2005, p. 1).

In this light constructivism provides the opportunity to understand and interpret the different subjective mental constructs of teachers' experiences and perspectives to generate a hypothesis that can be explored further. In addition, according to constructivists, trustworthiness, and authenticity (Guba & Lincoln, 1985, pp. 76-77) define quality. Therefore, identifying the personal stance, the research tradition, the phenomenon, and the research paradigm provides congruence and constitutes the basic framework of the study at hand (Savin-Baden & Major, 2013, p. 41).

3.1.1 Decision to use qualitative research approach

Choosing the qualitative research approach is embedded in the aspect of interest and the research questions formulated to guide the study. This study seeks to address the problem of the gender gap in teaching by exploring the experiences and perceptions of teachers. In this regard, the exploration provides the opportunity to understand their personal experiences and perceptions of gender in their teaching (Alshenqueeti, 2014, p. 39; Krugger, 2010, p. 42) and the possibility to find differences and similarities for a better understanding, interpretation and analysis. Also, qualitative methods make provision for collecting exhaustive and extensive information from a few purposefully selected respondents (Savin-Baden & Major, 2013, p. 314). In this light, the in-depth information collected could help to contest beliefs, expose concealed issues, and also provide reasons for specific thoughts, behaviours and attitudes (UNESCO, 2005, pp. 9-10). In addition, empirical evidence obtained from qualitative research responds to the needs of the society as policy decisions take into consideration findings that contribute to new knowledge and development (Loeb et al., 2017, p.17). Thus, the usage of the qualitative research approach to collect, analyse, and interpret data that provides empirical evidence becomes crucial for addressing the gender gap in teaching.

3.2 The Sample

The sample for the study at hand was obtained through purposeful sampling. (Unal et al., 2018, p. 36). Purposeful sampling describes meaningful selection of participants from whom to collect data, that is central to the purpose of

the study. (Creswell & Clark, 2011, p. 173). Patton argues that the participants are purposefully chosen to provide extensive, rich, and detailed information on the topic under study but not to generalize from the sample (Patton, 2002, p.273) p.73). Thus, it is evident that purposeful sampling is rigid, shaped by categories, for example: of age, gender, status, and location (Savin-Baden & Major, p. 312- 314). Meanwhile, the available time, place, space, and selection of participants according to the topic and purpose of the research (Creswell & Clark, 2011, p.174) becomes crucial.

In the study at hand, the Protestant education system in the Anglophone sub-system of education in Cameroon provided the sample space. The sample size was four (two males and two females) with each participant having a bachelor's degree and teaching in an urban school. The following categories were considered in the differentiation of the sample: gender, subject specialty, longevity in the profession, teacher training and age. The sampling table presented below ascribes pseudonyms of colours to the research participants to assure anonymity.

Table 1: Sample table

S/N	Name	Sex	Subject area	Longevity in teaching (years)	Training	Age (years)
1	Mrs. Gray	F	Humanities	< 20	In-service trained	>40
2	Mr. Green	M	Language	> 20	Not trained	<43
3	Mr. Brown	M	Natural Science	>10	In-service trained	< 50
4	Mrs. Black	F	Natural Science	> 8	Not trained	>35

Source: *Fai, Primary data, 2019*

3.3 Data collection

The data collection method chosen to investigate teachers' perceptions of gender in their own classroom practice is the semi-structured individual interview method. According to literature, the semi-structured individual interview articulates a face to face conversation in which the interviewer asks open-ended questions on the topic under study to obtain detailed descriptions and elaborate information from a single respondent at a time (Alshenqeeti, 2014, p.40; Savin-Baden & Major, 2013, p. 359).

Meanwhile, the interview guide keeps the interviewer and interviewee within the context of the research questions (Savin-Baden & Major, 2013, p. 59; UNESCO, 2005, p. 46) although prompting the respondent with further questions to elicit more information remain salient (Savin-Baden & Major, 2013, p.359; UNESCO, 2005, p. 46). In addition, semi-structured interviews provide the latitude for the interviewee to ask questions for clarity in the course of the conversation. Furthermore, literature indicates that semi-structured interviews address issues from a general perspective and then narrow down to specifics while gradually introducing key issues or questions directly related to the topic under study (Savin-Baden & Major, 2013, p.359).

Thus, this process entails budgeting adequate time for the conversation to allow the respondent to exhaust all information without any interruptions (UNESCO, 2005, p. 46), a period during which the interviewer plays the role of a learner and an active listener (Savin-Baden & Major, 2013, p.7). Literature also emphasizes ethical considerations to build and sustain trust, honesty, and integrity during the

interview process (Alshenqeeti, 2014, p. 44; UNESCO, 2005, p.15). In the same vein, the confidentiality and anonymity of the interviewee becomes essential, especially on sensitive research topics that might cause victimization or stigmatization (Savin-Baden & Major, 2013, pp. 321-322; UNESCO, 2005, p. 15). Sometimes tokens are used to appreciate the sacrifice of time and acceptance to share perceptions and experiences. However, opinions of scholars on this practice are mixed. (UNESCO, 2005, p. 17). In this study, the phenomenological semi-structured individual interview (Mutekwe et al., 2013, p.309) therefore provides the opportunity to thoroughly explore the experiences and perceptions of teachers regarding the phenomenon, gender.

As earlier mentioned, the semi-structured individual interview method is used to collect data (Savin-Baden & Major, 2013, p.359) with the interview guide as the research instrument (p.367). The data collection process entailed two phases: the preparatory phase and the execution phase. The interview guide was developed from the sub-questions by operationalising the research question of how secondary school teachers perceive gender in their own teaching. In the process, the initial, follow-up and closing questions (Savin-Baden & Major, 2013, p. 365) of the interview guide were formulated to provide extensive information that adequately addressed the research sub-questions. The guide was rehearsed to authenticate its adequacy since the quality of the research instrument influences the quality of the data. The collection of data took place in Cameroon within the framework of the Protestant education system in the anglophone sub-system of education. To this end, the Protestant education system provided the sample

space from which four purposefully selected teachers (two males and two females) were obtained. With the research instrument in place, the interviewer asked each respondent about their daily interaction with students in school and in the classroom. The interviewer further asked follow-up questions (Savin-Baden & Major, 2013, pp. 365-366) about how they interact with boys and with girls to gain in-depth information and bring out similarities and differences. Meanwhile, to address how teachers understanding of gender influences their classroom practice, the interviewer asked about the teachers' perceptions of their interaction with boys and girls during lessons.

Furthermore, questions about boys' self-perception, girls' self-perception and how boys and girls perceive each other regarding the teachers' subjects were raised. In addition, the question to understand teachers' experiences and perceptions in using learning resources from a gender perspective was pertinent. Meanwhile, the third sub-question, to address the strategies teachers develop to deal with gender-related challenges in their classroom practice, explored their perceptions of the gender-related challenges they encounter and how they deal with them. Meanwhile, an opportunity was given to the respondents to share anything else regarding gender and their teaching experience. These key questions and more contributed to exploring how secondary school teachers perceive gender in their teaching. Respondents were appreciated for accepting to participate in the process of constructing new knowledge and contributing to educational science (Savin-Baden & Major, 2013, p. 334). The interviews lasted on the average for 30 minutes.

Quality of data

Patton argues that the quality of data is connected to the sample selected and the objective of the study (Patton, 2002, p.267). Based on this, he describes some criteria within the structural frameworks for determining quality. In the research under study the stance for determining the quality of the data is embedded in Patton's social construction and constructivist criteria (p.267). Regarding these criteria, he emphasizes the acknowledgment of subjectivity, authenticity, reflexivity, trustworthiness, and individuality in the selection of interviewees. Thus, the selection process acknowledged these criteria, which ascertain the quality of data. Furthermore, to ascertain the originality of the data, face-to-face interviews were audiotaped, and transcribed, word verbatim. Respondents shared their experiences and perspectives of gender in their own teaching while being guided by the interviewer, using the interview protocol. In addition, to avoid bias originating from existing relationships, the selected teachers had not worked in the same institution with the interviewer. Meanwhile the sample comprised of two males and two females considering the topic under study, to avoid bias regarding gender specific perceptions.

3.4 Data analysis

According to literature, data analysis is a continuous process that involves the detailed examination of collected data to construct meaning and respond to the research questions (Savin-Baden & Major, 2013, p. 434). Faced with the criticality of data analysis and the variety of methods available, researchers choose appropriate methods depending on their positionality, the paradigm chosen, the

research topic and the problem to be investigated (Savin-Baden & Major, 2013, p.434). For the research at hand, the descriptive method of data analysis is chosen which is congruent with the stance, the paradigm, the topic and the research questions. In the light of the descriptive method of data analysis, literature indicates that it is the simplest form of data analysis involving systematic and dense description (Denizen, 1989b, p.83; Dey, 2003, p.32) of the text at the explicit level to develop patterns and links that are relevant and important (Loeb et al., 2017, p.17) to the research findings. Once developed, the patterns and connections elicit themes that reflect the understanding of the idea in the research topic (Loeb et al., 2017, p.9). By comparing themes from different transcripts, differences and similarities are identified that lead to the conceptualization framework (Loeb et al., 2017, p.24). Thus, descriptive codes obtained from the transcript are used in the categorization process (Savin-Baden & Major, 2013, p.423) to develop patterns and interconnections that establish themes and give rise to generalizations from which hypotheses are made. This inductive method which characterises qualitative research (Savin-Baden & Major, 2013, p.14) becomes crucial for the topic at hand.

Creswell and Clark (2011) highlight three main steps in analysing data; organization, examination and representation phases (Creswell & Clark, 2011, p.204). While the organizational phase involves characterization of the descriptive data, the examination phase deals with cutting, coding, categorizing, and converting the descriptive data into themes. Then comes, the representation stage, which involves creating, wherein the researcher designs how to display the findings (Savin-Badin & Major, 2013,

p. 419). Therefore, each stage is crucial to the whole data analysis process in view of the effective description and obtainment of desired results based on the research question. For the study at hand, the descriptive method of data analysis adequately analyses the data at the explicit level. Thus, the method is utilised to explore teachers' perceptions regarding gender in their own teaching.

3.3.1 Data analysis process

In this part, the data analysis process of the study at hand is described. The process is embedded in the qualitative inductive principle which ascertains the dependence of the description on collected data, analysing individual data separately and synthesizing the data for generalization (Savin-Baden & Major, 2013, p. 14) and further hypotheses. In the study at hand to explore the perceptions of secondary school teachers regarding gender in their teaching, the preparatory and the analysis phases became crucial for adequate data analysis.

The preparatory phase involved characterization in which the data was transcribed as recorded (Savin-Baden & Major, 2013, p. 420), due to its relevance to the topic (p. 420). In this regard, the four interviews were transcribed taking precaution to avoid losing any data, to assure the originality of the conversation and in part, its authenticity. Applying the interpretive phenomenological technique of descriptive data analysis (p. 442), the transcriptions were printed out and read several times. This technique was utilised to gain a deep understanding of the teachers' experiences and perceptions of gender in their own teaching. After the first reading, repetitions were deleted to focus on the essential data (p. 153). While reading, codes were created and in

the coding process, different words and phrases were fitted under each code. (Savin-Baden & Major, 2013, pp. 421-422). Thus, the coding facilitated appropriate finding of data, the detailed examination of data and a means of identifying and comparing patterns for further investigations (Savin-Badin & Major, 2013, pp. 421- 422). Meanwhile, after coding, the data was summarised into sub-categories and further into categories. The transformed categories were further converted into common ideas called themes (Savin-Badin & Major, 2013, pp. 426-427). which were then compared to bring out similarities and differences in teachers' perceptions of gender in their own teaching. The four transcripts were thus analysed at the explicit level of description. Moreover, recognizing the subjectivity of the interpretation (Pope, 2007, p. 174) and presuming the authenticity of the collected data (Peskin, 2000, p. 8) was pertinent. For instances gender stereotypes, gender equality, learning interactions, and social interactions were some codes used in the data analysis.

3.5 Challenges and limits of the research

The challenges in conducting the study at hand were twofold: first at the level of data collection and second at the level of data analysis. At the level of data collection, the research was conducted in the Anglophone part of Cameroon experiencing an armed conflict between the Cameroon military and the separatist fighters for the restoration of the Southern Cameroons statehood. Thus, interviews were conducted amidst heightening insecurity (World Bank, 2017, p. 3) and most schools were shut down. Therefore, meeting with earmarked participants for the interview was a huge challenge and led to several postponements. Also,

interviews were conducted amidst gunshots and each time created an atmosphere of uncertainty. Conducting semi-structured interviews entailed gathering huge data which are transcribed and then analysed. The process becomes tedious and time consuming to sort and analyse huge data manually. Furthermore, the analysis and the interpretation of descriptive data involved sorting raw data to obtain meaningful data, revealing the complexity of the process. Meanwhile, the pertinence of understanding patterns and designing a structure for communicating the nature of the findings compounded the challenge (Patton, 2002, p. 276). In addition, various scholars provide arguments on the guiding principle to determine the quality of the study, thus ramifying the difficulty in attesting its credibility. Moreover, the subjectivity of interviews likely reduced the credibility of the data collected.

Regarding the limitations of this study, the scope of the study was constraint to the protestant education system in the Anglophone sub-system of education in Cameroon. Thus, the findings may not adequately reflect the perceptions of gender in the classroom practice of secondary school teachers in Cameroon. This is further compounded by the cultural diversity of the country and the colonial heritage that divide the country into two distinct and parallel cultures (Koning, 2009, p. 75). Furthermore, due to the limited time for the study, the four individual interviews do not adequately represent the gender experiences and perceptions of secondary school teachers in Cameroon, which leads to the reluctance to generalize from the findings.

4.

FINDINGS

This chapter is devoted to present the results of the study which seeks to address the question of how secondary school teachers perceive gender in their teaching.

The description of the results, focuses on the following seven categories; teachers' understanding of gender, teachers perceptions of girls and boys in and out of classrooms, teachers' perceptions of students interest and academic performance by gender, teachers' general perceptions of boys and girls, teachers' perceptions of the learning resources and the curriculum, gender-related challenges teachers experience and mitigating strategies. Meanwhile, Mr. Green, Mrs. Black, Mrs. Gray and Mr. Brown are the pseudonyms given to the four purposefully selected teachers who provided the accumulated data.

4.1 Teachers' understanding of gender and related terms in teaching

The understanding of how teachers perceive gender in teaching was reflected in the gender sensitive responses of interviewees. The following expressions revealed the teachers' understanding of gender as they described their teaching. In their narratives one could hear them say "... one sex does not feel marginalised," "...encouraging the

sex that lags behind,” “...ensure equal participation and need for equal participation,” and “...equal representation.” The following section presents portions of the interview transcript where the statements were made.

One sex does not feel marginalised: Mr. Green’s narrates, “there are various methods that a teacher can use in the classroom setting that can make students to be interested whether boys or girls so that one gender should not feel marginalized or left behind” (Interview of Mr. Green, April 2019, line 165-168).

Encouraging the sex that lags: Mrs. Black remarks, “Okay, while in class maybe in the course of my lesson if I ask a question and I discover that most people that are responding are girls, I turn and say but ah boys you people are sleeping, girls are on top, can you just let the girls like that defeat you? Ah is not possible, I try to encourage them that there should at least come up” (Interview of Mrs. Black, April 2019, line 19-23).

Ensure equal participation: Mrs. Gray also recounts, “In the classroom with the boys and girls, sometimes in lessons we try to make sure that the students all participate in the sense that we don’t allow only maybe boys to be contributing their ideas” (Interview of Mrs. Gray, April 2019, line 24-26).

Need for equal participation and equal representation: Mr. Brown indicates, “Sometimes when they have small practical work somebody will say this is the way it is to be done and this is the procedure and another female says no, from what the teacher said this is what is supposed to be. The male children will always insist, so I want to

think that it is not a balanced” (Interview of Mr. Brown, April 2019, line 54-57). Furthermore, Mr. Brown adds, “So, most resource materials do not highlight gender issues. When you look at most of the diagrams there are always males doing one thing or the other” (Interview of Mr. Brown, April 2019, line 99-101). This means that, teachers’ make a conscious effort to ensure that one sex does not feel marginalized, both boys and girls participate equally in learning and a balanced representation of boys and girls in learning resources and the curriculum is given. Thus, teachers’ understanding of gender reflect gender equality and gender equity in their own teaching. This means that the understanding of gender is a prerequisite to gender sensitive pedagogy. Although the study shows overall trends in teachers’ understanding of gender, the results also highlight differences between trained teachers and untrained teachers. While the trained teachers identify gender biases in the learning resources and the curriculum, untrained teachers are unaware of this.

In the case of related terms, teachers’ perceptions show enforcement of gender stereotypes and gender roles in their classroom practice.

Enforcement of gender stereotypes: Mrs. Gray narrates, “because if the man goes to the forest kills those animals and then brings meat and there is no woman to cook and sell then the meat will surely rotten” (Interview of Mrs. Gray, April 2019, line 80-81). She continues, “there is nothing a man will be doing outside without a woman pushing” (line 57-58). This is an example for a woman in a subordinate position as the statement “woman pushing” indicates that she comes from behind. In the same vein, Mr. Brown

recounts, “I always say that the girls are cleaner than the boys” (Interview transcript of Mr. Brown, April 2019, line 154). For instance, “girls are cleaner than boys” is a gender stereotype. He continues, “Probably for me I can diagnose that they know the correct response, but they think that it is too feminine just answering” (line 33-35). In addition, he observes, “If there is some sweeping of the classroom to be done even the smallest male in form one, form two will refuse to do, they want the female children to do” (line 38-40). Thus, the findings show gender stereotyping and gender roles in teachers’ classroom practice.

Breaking gender stereotypes: On the other hand, teachers’ perceptions show breaking gender stereotypes and gender roles in their classroom practice. Mrs. Gray describes non-stereotypic roles and responsibilities and the use of role models to break gender stereotypes. She asserts, “Not only men should be lawyers; women too are lawyers. There are big women in town who are lawyers so when you do like that it encourages them and they see that there is no work they cannot involve in” (Interview of Mrs. Gray, April 2019, line 162-164). She continues, “so you now see that the roles can even be interchanged and sometimes since it is a boarding school especially this last year that we were interrupted, the boys and the girls, were all in the kitchen. Yes. When it comes to preparing food this one will be telling his own recipe. We were there always with the principal especially on Saturday to assist make their meal look good so the boys and girls are there and even in the food committee of the school you have boys and girls so that there should know that something that concern the kitchen is not just for women (Interview of Mrs. Gray, April 2019, line 100-107).

Mr. Brown also advocates for the use of female role models in science to break gender stereotypes. He advocates documentation of female scientists and their achievements. In this light, he recounts, “I could have loved that we have a textbook or a write up of what female scientist have done. Just for female scientist or just like sometimes we talk about the history of some women around us projecting them so that it is in the form of a magazine which every form one child can be given as a motivation at the beginning so that you just take the book and you look at it and also you will know that if this woman can achieve, I will also achieve” (Interview of Mr. Brown, April 2019, line 145-147). He illustrates the portrayal of female role models in science. From the findings, teachers’ perceptions reveal the partial understanding of gender in their classroom practice as the perceptions of some respondents show that they enforce gender stereotyping and gender roles in some instances and break the gender stereotypes in other instances. This emphasizes the pertinence of gender awareness creation, through professional development and follow-up, for teachers’ classroom practice to be adequately gender sensitive.

4.2 Teachers’ general perceptions of boys and girls

In the light of teachers’ general perceptions of boys and girls, the findings show five aspects that differentiates girls from boys. These aspects include boys’ defeatist tendency in academics, boys’ domineering attitude, dangerous masculinity, boys playful and worrisome behaviour, and girls as achievers.

Boys defeatist tendency: Mr. Green observes, “I want to think that since boys are having a certain complex already

that the language is difficult, is complicated and so on, comparatively to girls who are more open and more softer to the language,” (Interview of Mr. Green, April 2019, line 93-95). He adds, “boys take things for granted. Once they are defeated, they just abandon it” (line 34). Mrs. Black recounts, “...or maybe they are shying away, I don’t know why” (Interview of Mrs. Black, April 2019, line 60-61). She adds, “but majority of them have come to understand that girls too they also have their place, they are doing it” (Interview of Mrs. Black, April 2019, line 63-64).

Domineering attitude of boys: Mr. Green indicates, “So I just think that boys are just being full of themselves and so on (Interview of Mr. Green, April 2019, line 99). Mr. Brown narrates, “The male children think that they are better up but equally females are very interested in aspects of science that have to do with women” (Interview of Mr. Brown, April 2019, line 57-59). He adds, “but at the lower level the male children think that their own ideas must be accepted even if they are wrong” (line 53). In addition, Mr. Brown recounts, “male students always think that they need to boss the female students. When you give a task that they should do, the male either abandons to the female and go away or he is just observing, and the female will do everything” (line 112-115).

Dangerous masculinity of boys: Mr. Green narrates, “they don’t like to take risk of making errors for example they are shy of making errors” (Interview of Mr. Green, April 2019, line 99-100). Mrs. Black’s explains, “but they are some few of them, they say no they cannot believe that they can’t just allow a girl to defeat them. There don’t want to accept it. But they are just few of them, a handful of them” (Interview of Mrs. Black, 2019, line 61-63).

Boys worrisome and playful attitude: Mr. Green's observes, "boys are more incline to give headache to the teacher than girls" (Interview of Mr. Green, April 2019, line 142-143.) He continues, "...and since they are too playful and they shy away..." (Interview of Mr. Green, April 2019, line 100).

Girls as achievers: Mr. Brown asserts, "I think in the higher level the female students see themselves as people who can achieve more. They don't care much about boys and sometimes there even argue with them on certain concept, on certain things they will come to me" (Interview of Mr. Brown, April 2019, line 50-53).

Mrs. Black asserts, "It is in the past that girls use to feel that they are in the back, but things have evolved, things have changed. They believe that if this boy can do this, they can do it and do it better. I don't know whether the boys, what they are thinking (Interview of Mrs. Black, April 2019, line 52-55). Mr. Green adds, "whereas girls quite often try to challenge themselves, challenge even others to prove that they can do it" (Interview of Mr. Green, April 2019, line 101-102).

This reveals that although most of the boys manifest a domineering attitude and dangerous masculinity in the classroom, they feel challenged and defeated in academics and portray playful and worrisome behaviours. Meanwhile, the study also shows that a few boys compete with girls at the top. However, for the most part, girls are assertive, have a positive self-image, and see themselves as achievers.

4.3 Teachers' perceptions of students' interaction by gender

Regarding teachers' perceptions of students' interaction by gender, the findings are sorted into three categories: learning, informal, and social interactions.

Learning interaction: These are teachers' perceptions of their students' learning involvement during lessons. In this regard, Mr. Green, Mr. Brown and Mrs. Black indicate that girls participate more than boys while Mrs. Gray perceives that both boys and girls participate equally in her lessons.

Sharing his experience in the case of girls participating more than boys, Mr. Green asserts, "In the course of teaching I find more girls being interested in asking questions in class. They are more interested in trying to ask more question in class whereas boys sit there always tongue tied" (Interview of Mr. Green, April 2019, line 18-22). He continues, "So, you realize that girls are not shy like boys, so you have a passage in the textbook you quickly realized that a girl will readily show her hand up to read because they make an effort, whereas boys will always feel shy. I don't know whether it is because they think that if they commit an error, girls will laugh at them, so they already feel defeated at that level so by that, girl take advantage. When you want to send them even to the board, you see a girl will quickly be readily available to go to the board than a boy. The boy will be sitting behind and waiting to see who will opt first" (line 66-75).

Mr. Brown corroborates, "My daily interaction particularly with the students now, I see the female students of the science class maybe lower sixth science if I take my

subject Chemistry, I see that the female students are more enthusiastic than male students and females are a little bit more organized than the male and with my interaction with them, they are more serious with their book work than the male. That is at the senior level. Even at the junior level form one, form two, yes, the females are more concerned (Interview of Mr. Brown, April 2019, line 4-13). He adds, "In the classroom, there are a few boys that are very active. But they are active in the sense that they want to answer difficult question so when you ask a simple question, they just seat and fold their arms." (line 31-33). Furthermore, Brown continues, "but form one and two is different. Everybody participates but what I have seen is that particularly for all the classes, the male students turn to be bossy and try to boss the children. If there is some swiping of the classroom to be done even the smallest male in form one, form two will refuse to do, they want the female children to do and it goes with sometimes in the small task that are given or group work, they will allow the female to be doing more and they seat and observe which is really a change because in the past it was the person who understood the task very well that wanted to do it but this other time now is like the male children just seat. They can only come in if you promise them that now this task will depend on marks and the marks will affect all of them and that is when you see them coming in to work" (line 36-46).

Mrs. Black confirms, "While in class maybe in the course of my lesson if I ask a question and I discover that most people that are responding are girls, I turn and say but ah boys you people are sleeping, girls are on top, can you just let this our girls like that defeat you?" (Interview of Mrs. Black, April 2019, line 19-22).

Commenting on the equal participation of boys and girls, Mrs. Gray observes, “very few girls are shy, but the children are generally open to contribute their ideas. At times you may even probe into a group to calm them down because you see where a girl is arguing and bringing up her point and the boy is trying to challenge and the girl will say that no and maybe justify from their books and then sometimes you see the boys will say no but your point is correct, they take to it and is okay” (Interview of Mrs. Gray, April 2019, 35-40). She continues, “You even see a situation where they do their assignment together and a boy can go up to a girl to ask for assistance in particular areas just like the girls too can come even after the group work and some other learning continues” (Interview of Mrs. Gray, April 2019, 43-47).

These findings show that, for the most part teachers perceive interacting more with girls in the learning process although a trained female teacher perceives interacting equally with both boys and girls.

Therefore, teachers’ perceptions show a gender differentiation in the learning interactions in favour of girls. The findings show that girls are more open and freely approach both male and female teachers especially the younger girls. Furthermore, the study shows that teachers perceive girls to be more active, inquisitive, focus, pushy and perform better, while boys are nonchalant, bossy towards girls, easily feel defeated and shy away when it comes to academics. This gives the girls an edge over the boys whose self-esteem is lowered, and learning becomes a challenge. Nonetheless, the study also reveals that the adequate understanding of gender provides a conscious

and equal opportunity for teachers' interactions with boys and girls which promotes equal participation and thereby could improve learner outcome.

Informal interactions: In the case of informal interactions, teachers' perceptions were similar but varied. All four interviewees interact with the students informally, although Mr. Green, Mr. Brown and Mrs. Black indicate that they interact more with girls than boys. Meanwhile, Mrs. Gray interacts with both girls and boys at equal levels.

In this light, Mr. Green recounts, "I have realized that female students, they always have the tendency to even approach their teachers even out of the classroom to ask questions, even questions that are not related to what was taught, questions that may lead to their understanding of their daily life issues and so on, whereas boys are care free" (Interview of Mr. Green, April 2019, line 175-179).

Mr. Brown also narrates, "Even at the junior level form one, form two, yes, the females are more concerned. They come to me asking questions about science, they want to know what is happening, but the males are like more contented they hardly come. You hardly see a male student coming to me to ask something" (Interview of Mr. Brown, 2019, line, 12-16).

Mrs. Black confirms, "Yes, they will feel free to come but am open to all of them as a teacher, yes, I welcome everybody that comes my way. But that interaction with boys is not as compared to girls" (Interview of Mrs. Black, April 2019, line 14-16).

Meanwhile, Mrs. Gray interacts on equal strength with both boys and girls, especially in the recent past. Mrs. Gray

asserts, “In terms of interacting with boys’, they feel free. They are free, they are open. Some even come in private to the office to ask their things, personal things (okay), same with the girls especially because since these past years too we have introduced this life skill in school, so it brought the children even more closer to us” (Interview of Mrs. Gray, April 2019 line 12-15).

Thus, regarding informal relationship, the findings indicate that teachers interact more with girls. This means that the girls outshine the boys, in contacting male and female teachers in and out of the classrooms to seek solutions to their academic and social challenges. This confirms girls’ assertiveness, positive self-concept and inquisitive behaviour reflected in teachers’ perceptions of girls’ learning interactions, in this study. However, the perceptions of teachers who received training on life skill education reveal equal interaction with boys and girls, which cannot be ignored.

Social interactions: The study at hand also reveals that teachers perceive varied relationships in schools and classrooms between male teachers, female teachers, girls, and boys. In this light, the results reveal perceptions of cordial relationships, romantic relationships, peer influence, teenage challenges, and tensions.

In the case of cordial relationship between male teachers and female students. Mr. Green observes, “looking at gender, I want to think that the rapprochement between male colleague and female students is always very cordial” (Interview of Mr. Green, April 2019, line 173-175).

Furthermore, the results reveal that male students rely on female teachers. Mrs. Gray narrates, "...but boys will confide to the female teachers" (Interview of Mrs. Gray, April 2019, line 17-18). Regarding cordial relationships, teachers' perceptions reveal that female teachers and male students have cordial relationships which fosters learning.

The findings reveal romantic relationships between male teachers and female students. Mrs. Gray recalls, "in some cases you see male colleagues dating female students and so it gives the female students now that relationship with the teacher to see themselves as equal" (Interview of Mrs. Gray, 2019, line 126-128). The results also indicate romantic relationships between male students and female students. Mr. Green observes, "Boys at times you see, as they are seated in class maybe some of them in higher classes will sit and they are distracted by other things and looking at their female counterparts and so on" (Interview of Mr. Green, April 2019, line 147-149). Mrs. Gray concurs, "...must have both boys and girls so that they start feeling together in the open not only in the dark like we always have them in many corners" (Interview of Mrs. Gray, line 29-30). Therefore, the results show that romantic relationships exist in the learning environment and have implications for learning.

Regarding tensions, male teachers and bigger boys get into conflict when male teachers attempt to inflict corporal punishment on them. Mrs. Gray recounts, "Then with the boys, now sometimes in relation to the men, when the boys too are big and the teachers now want to beat the children, the boy will resist especially because maybe the

friends are there and he wants to proof. So, you see a teacher will get angry and say I will not go to that class and teach until this, this, ..." (Interview of Mrs. Gray, April 2019, line 129-135).

Furthermore, the results also show tensions between female teachers and female students due to the romantic relationships of female students with male teachers. Mrs. Gray recounts, "They (female students) now see them (female teachers) as competitors because in some cases you see male colleagues dating female students and so it gives the female students now that relationship with the teacher to see themselves as equals" (Interview of Mrs. Gray, April 2019, line 126-128). In the same vein, Mrs. Gray adds, "But when the children start menstruating and maybe boys start talking to them in school, they start looking at themselves and equating them to you" (line 123-125). In the case of tensions, the study shows that for the most part teachers perceive tensions from two ends: between female students and female teachers and between male teachers and male students. In the case of female teachers and female students, the study reveals that female students who have romantic relationships with male teachers see themselves as competitors with female teachers and as such disrespect the female teachers. On the other hand, tensions between male teachers and bigger boys result from bigger boys protecting their gender identity (ego) especially when embarrassed amongst their peers.

In addition, the findings indicate peer influence and teenage social challenges that affect boys' and girls' academic performance negatively. Mr. Brown remarks, "the females

are very good in form one, form two. They are anxious about their studies but as they move higher, they start dropping. Those are just the main issues. We may say that it is hmmm, peer influence, teenage experience and things like that” (Interview of Mr. Brown, April 2019, 117-120). In relation to peer influence and teenage challenges, teachers’ perceptions show that teenage boys and girls are influenced by peers to engage in uncouth and illicit sexual relationships creating distraction and lack of concentration to learning. This leads to low academic achievement, low self-esteem, discouragement, and possible dropout.

Thus, the study at hand reveals that, cordial relationships, romantic relationships, tensions, peer influence and teenage challenges characterize the social atmosphere of secondary schools and classrooms in the Protestant education system of Cameroon. These aspects of social interactions have a huge impact on the school climate and learner achievement, which affects the quality of education.

4.4 Teachers’ general perceptions of boys and girls

Interest: Concerning the question of how teachers perceive boys’ and girls’ interest in their subject area, the views of Mr. Green, Mr. Brown and Mrs. Black were similar but different from that of Mrs. Gray. While Mr. Green, Mr. Brown and Mrs. Black indicate that girls show more interest and commitment in learning their subjects, Mrs. Gray observes equal commitment and participation in her specialty.

Mr. Green indicates, “the experience I have is that girls are much more interested in the language than boys. I have tried to dick or find out what could be the reason why girls are more prone to be interested in the language than boys

because boys always make fun of the language whereas girls take the language more seriously” (Interview of Mr. Green, April 2019, line 14-18).

Mr. Brown remarks, “for me if I judge from the time that I was teaching and now, I see that females are more interested in science even than the male students” (Interview of Mr. Brown, April 2019, line 17-18).

Mrs. Black concurs, “Vis a vis my subject, the content I can say the girls are always on top, they are always leading, the girls. Even though at times you have too boys but comparatively the girls are on top” (Interview of Mrs. Black, April 2019, line 43-45).

Meanwhile Mrs. Gray narrates, “you even see a situation where boys and girls do assignments together and a boy can go up to a girl to ask for assistance in particular areas just like the girls too can come even after the group work and some other learning continues” (Interview of Mrs. Gray, April 2019, line 42-46). This shows that both boys and girls participate equally without any differentiation.

Thus, teachers’ perceptions show that for the most part, the girls are more conscious, interested, committed, and participate more in learning compared to boys. The study also indicates that boys and girls collaborate to learn from each other especially in the higher classes.

Academic performance: In the context of students’ academic performance, Mr. Green, Mr. Brown, and Mrs. Black differentiate the performance of boys and girls. They perceive that for the most part girls perform better than boys.

Mr. Green recounts, “That is what I am saying as we look even in our marks sheet you see that girls produce better result than boys because they make an effort as they use the didactic resource” (Interview of Mr. Green, April 2019, line 70-72).

Mr. Brown adds, “and the past two test one, test two, the first the top positions have been occupied by the females so, you have among the first ten best children you may have only two males appearing” (Interview of Mr. Brown, April 2019, line 8-10).

Mrs. Black narrates, “they are leading in the subject, you give a test you see a girl most girls; we have more girls passing than the boys and having very good performance. Yes! So, I think the girls, they do perform better in my subject than the boys” (interview of Mrs. Black, April 2019, line 55-57).

Therefore, regarding boys’ and girls’ interest and academic performance, the results show that girls are more conscious, committed and participate more in learning the languages and sciences compared to boys. In the case of humanities, the competition between boys and girls is keen and the collaboration is high with relatively equal commitment and participation. However, on the whole, the results reveal that girls are outpacing boys.

4.5 Teachers’ perceptions of learning resources and the curriculum

Perceptions of the learning resources: Mrs. Gray and Mr. Brown, who are in-service trained teachers, identify gender biases while Mrs. Black and Mr. Green who are not trained, do not. Mr. Brown narrates, “In regard to gender,

hmmm let me first of all say many books do not take gender issues very seriously” (Interview of Mr. Brown, April 2019, line 95-96). He continues, “So, most books, most resource materials do not highlight gender issues. When you look at most of the diagrams there are always males doing one thing or the other” (Interview of Mr. Brown, line 99-101). On the other hand, Mr. Green does not realize gender bias in any learning resources. He remarks, “No! no!, I have not yet come across such a situation where a passage will be giving more advantage to the boy or girl (Interview of Mr. Green, line 88-89).

Perceptions of the curriculum: Mrs. Gray comments, “Yes, when it comes to the subject proper the girls may feel that many women have not really contributed to History because the content that we study, but the syllabus of Cameroon, the girls see very few women contributing in bringing out changes” (Interview of Mrs. Gray, April 2019, line 51-53). Mr. Brown adds, “Our syllabus is different and what we want to highlight in daily life is different. That is the difficulty (line 108-109). Thus, in the light of teachers’ perceptions of the learning resources and the curriculum, the study reveals that the learning resources and the curriculum are gender bias which influence teachers’ classroom practice as they endeavour to adapt the existing learning resources or select gender sensitive resources for classroom usage. It is evident from the study that gender bias learning resources and the curriculum are recognized by teachers trained on gender sensitive pedagogy. This raises the relevance of including a gender perspective in pre-service and in-service teacher trainings for the effective implementation of gender equality and gender equity in teaching.

4.6 Gender related challenges in teaching

In the light of gender related challenges encountered during lessons, all the respondents share various challenges. Mrs. Gray, who seems not to experience any challenges, observes challenges encountered by other colleagues. Thus, she highlights the following challenges experienced by other teachers; disrespect of school rules and regulations, maturation of girls, female students dating male teachers and equating themselves to female teachers, disrespect of teachers and protection of self-image by boys. In this light, Mrs. Gray narrates, “the challenges are there but for me I have not seen them many. I have seen with some other colleagues because for me maybe my open nature I like to talk with the boys and even go right deep into their private matter, so they are already open” (Interview of Mrs. Gray, April 2019, line 110-113).

Disrespect of rules and regulations: Mrs. Gray narrates, “But with some colleagues there run into problems with them, sometimes you see female teachers will run into problems with boys, there are not well dress, they are this” (Interview of Mrs Gray, 2019, line 113-115). She adds, “They (girls) now see them as competitors because even in some cases you see male colleagues dating female students and so it gives the female students now that relationship with the teacher to see themselves as equal and then sometimes, they run in to crisis of disrespect” (Interview of Mrs. Gray, 2019, line 126-129).

Maturation of girls: Mrs. Gray explains, “But when the children start menstruating and maybe boys start talking to them in school, they start looking at themselves and equating to you. That’s the challenge that female colleagues face with the girls” (Interview of Mrs. Gray, 2019, line 123-126).

Protection of boys self-image: Mrs. Gray narrates, “Then with the boys now sometimes in relation to the men when the boys too are big and when the teachers now want to beat the children the boys who are already big will resist especially because maybe the friends are there, and he wants to proof tough” (Interview of Mrs. Gray, 2019, line 129-134). “so sometimes it is not easy, but we just keep managing” (Interview of Mrs. Gray, April 2019, line 139-140). Meanwhile, Mr. Green highlights the following challenges; political inclination of boys, disruptive attitude of boys and easy distraction of boys.

Boys’ political inclination: Mr. Green remarks, “They (girls) are not politically incline like boys and so on and so forth” (Interview of Mr. Green, 2019, line 146-147).

Boys’ disruptive attitude: Mr. Green comments, “looking at how all of them behave in the classroom setting, boys are more incline to give headache to the teacher than girls. So with those problems that I have enumerated you see that it will be difficult to work with boys than to work with girls; it will be easier for a teacher working with girls because already you can easily tame them, you can direct them” (Interview of Mr. Green, April 2019, line 143-146).

Easy distraction of boys: Mr. Green continues, “Boys at times you see as they are seated in class maybe some of them in higher classes are distracted by other things and looking at their female counterparts and so on and by so doing time is passing and the least opportunity you miss from getting the teaching you miss so many things and it affects them and so on” (line 147-151). Mr. Brown indicates two main challenges, first, the bossy attitude of boys and second, a decline in girls’ concentration and performance as they progress to higher classes.

Bossy attitude of boys: Mr. Brown asserts, “The major challenge that I face is that the male students, they always think that they need to boss the female students. When you give a task that they should do, the male either abandon to the female and go away or he is just observing, and the female will do everything” (Interview of Mr. Brown, April 2019, 113-116).

Girls decline in academics as they progress: Mr. Brown explains, “the females are very good in form one, form two. They are anxious about their studies but as they move higher, they start dropping (Interview of Mr. Brown, April 2019, line 117-118).

From the above analysis, these challenges are entrenched in three gender-related aspects: Management of adolescents, romantic relationships and gender-based violence. These challenges hinder the effective and efficient implementation of gender sensitive teaching and impede gender equality and gender equity in the classroom. Thus, the teachers’ strategies to address the gender related challenges in teaching become pertinent.

4.7 Strategies to address the gender-related challenges

To deal with these challenges, Mr. Green, Mr. Brown, Mrs. Black and Mrs. Gray, highlight the following strategies; captivating gender sensitive learning strategies, use of role models, change of attitude, attending to boys’ and girls’ specific needs,

Captivating gender sensitive learning strategies: Mr. Green engages in learning strategies that are captivating and interesting to all the students and encouraging the boys who feel defeated in the subject. To this end, Mr.

Green indicates, “what I do is to look for materials that will be interesting that will make them to follow the class and so on, to vary the teaching method so that they should not feel defeated, they should not be bored by a certain concept and so on. So, we need to vary method, tell them stories or I introduce songs” (line 162-165). He continues, “that is what we do to bring back the boys who are feeling somehow marginalized by the language because girls don’t have that complex” (line 54-56).

Use of female role models: Mr. Brown adopts the use of female role models in science. In this light, he asserts, “I always use some analogy of some successful female scientist, what they had done, their contribution to science and so on and so forth, to make the boys not to think that all is they themselves” (Interview of Mr. Brown, April 2019, line 123-125).

Mrs. Gray advances two strategies to deal with the challenges. First, acknowledgement of change of attitude and second, responding to boys’ and girls’ specific needs.

Change of teacher’s attitude: Mrs. Gray recounts, “for me as a person I can even say that during this last three years I have really changed because you know I use to be very wild (laugh and clap). So, the children know that I have really changed” (Interview of Mrs. Gray, April 2019, line 185-190). She adds, “Yes, these past years, I have really been friendly (line 206).

Responding to boys’ and girls’ specific needs: Mrs. Gray asserts, “the children will be very free to come up especially with those lessons that we are giving them on life skills which has more of gender things because you teach them about their growth, how to take care of themselves and

all of that” (Interview of Mrs. Gray, April 2019, line 18-21). Furthermore, she narrates, “like I already mentioned, the girls may not feel comfortable especially when they are getting mature. Form one, two and three will feel very free, they will come to the office and say Ma it is like this am having inches, like this what is happening, then you will now explain to them how there should pee in the dormitory, how they should use the toilet and all of that” (Interview of Mrs. Gray, April 2019, line 119-123).

Thus, the study reveals the following strategies teachers adopt to address gender-related challenges in their own teaching; captivating learning strategies, use of role models, positive change of teachers’ attitude, and responding to boys’ and girls’ specific needs. To address the gender related challenges teachers experience in teaching, the study also reveals the following strategies; adopting captivating gender sensitive learning strategies, use of role models, positive change of teachers’ attitude, and responding to boys’ and girls’ specific needs.

From the analysis of the strategies derived from the findings and from a gender-related perspective of the challenges, life skills education is viewed as the encompassing strategy to deal with these challenges. Thus, integrating life skills education and gender sensitive pedagogy promotes social cohesion and a positive school climate to boost learning and motivate all learners to develop their full potential, while narrowing the gender gap in teaching and promoting education quality.

4.8 Summary of findings

In the summary that follows, a synthesis in the light of answering the research sub-questions and the main

question is realized. These sub-questions focused on the understanding of gender by secondary school teachers, how the understanding of gender influences their classroom practice and the strategies they develop to address the gender related challenges in teaching. Therefore, answering these sub-questions provides an answer to the main research question of how secondary school teachers perceive gender in their teaching.

In this light, the teachers' perceptions of gender are embedded in their understanding of gender and the implementation of gender sensitive pedagogy. This means that the teachers understanding of gender shape their self-concept and their perceptions of male and female teachers and also of boys and girls. Meanwhile, these perceptions influence teachers' ability to implement gender equality and gender equity in teaching to assure motivation, self-actualisation and broad life opportunities for all learners. Furthermore, teachers' perceptions of gender also influence their capacity to adopt appropriate mitigating measures in the face of gender-related challenges in the schools and classrooms. However, as findings suggest, the teachers' capacities are inadequate, indicating the dire need for teacher professional development in gender sensitive education and life skills education, which are embedded in the understanding of the gender dimension of quality teaching.

Moreover, the findings do not reveal any evidence of differentiation in male and female teachers' perceptions of gender in teaching, rather there is a differentiation between untrained and trained teachers in gender sensitive teaching and life skills education.

5.

GENDER DIMENSION OF QUALITY TEACHING

The discussion chapter examines the findings of the study at hand in the light of literature and scientific discourses to show the contribution of the study to educational science. In this light, the research question explores how secondary school teachers perceive gender in their own teaching. The reflection is based on the descriptive analysis of the transcriptions and findings therefrom. Thus, the study at hand reveals the perceptions of gender in the teaching of secondary school teachers from three perspectives; first, the understanding of gender, second, the influence of the understanding of gender in teachers' classroom practice, and third, strategies to address the gender related challenges teachers experience in their teaching.

Regarding the understanding of gender by secondary school teachers, the study shows that teachers perceive gender in their own teaching, linked to gender equity and gender equality in their classroom practice. This understanding is consistent with literature that reveals that gender in classroom practice is embedded in teachers' manifestation of gender equality and gender equity in their teaching through gender sensitive pedagogy (Korenien, 2018, p. 15; Mlama et al., 2005, p. 4).

Meanwhile, teachers' understanding of gender in their classroom practice is rooted in the implementation of gender responsiveness in teaching. This means that the understanding of gender influences teachers' self-concept, how they perceive learners, and how they approach the teaching learning process (Korenius, 2018, p. 43; UNESCO, 2015, p. 40). Therefore, the understanding of gender affects the teaching quality which becomes crucial for students' self-actualisation, motivation, and life opportunities. Thus, the results of the present study show the gender responsiveness of teachers their own teaching and how the understanding of gender influences the gender perspective of teaching quality (Daoust et al., 2012, pp. 46-47). Regarding the gender related challenges teachers encounter in their classroom practice, teachers' perceptions reveal that the challenges are embedded in managing adolescents, romantic relationships and gender-based violence. To deal with the gender related challenges, the findings indicate that teachers' strategies are centred on life skills education incorporated in gender sensitive pedagogy, which requires adequate training.

Therefore, the study at hand reveals that, the understanding of gender, its influence on teaching and teachers' strategies to deal with gender related challenges are crucial to ensure gender equality and gender equity in teaching. This requires teachers' pre-service and in-service continuous professional development that incorporates gender and life skills education (Korenius, 2018, p.43; UNESCO, 2015, p.40). Furthermore, adequate follow-up, supervision and evaluation backed by policies become pertinent to effectively reduce the gender gap in teaching and foster education quality (Daoust et al., 2012, p.46; Korenius, 2018, p.44).

5.1 Implementing gender sensitive pedagogies for quality improvement

Teachers' perceptions show the understanding of gender in the light of ensuring that no learner (boy or girl) is deprived of learning opportunities. This reflects gender equality and gender equity in teaching and is consistent with literature which opines that gender equality and gender equity in quality education emphasises equal opportunities and fairness to boys and girls and men and women (Daoust, 2012, p.12; MIX & EQUATE, 2008, pp. 5-6). This means that gender sensitivity in classroom practice ensures all learners' full participation, retention, completion and educational achievement (Mlama et al., 2005, p.4; Ombati & Ombati, 2012, p.127; UNESCO, 2015, p.40).

In the same vein, the results also tie with the sustainable development goals 4 on education and 5 on gender equality. While the goal on education highlights gender equality and gender equity for quality education, goal 5 focuses on the empowerment of females who for the most part are disadvantaged in education (UNESCO, 2016, p.7; UNESCO, 2017a, p.12). However, the present study shows that although females are disadvantaged when given the appropriate opportunity they excel. Thus, the vital role teachers play is to ensure teaching quality that enhances the attainment of these goals (Bregman, 2008, p. 45; Verspoor, 2008, p.216).

5.1.1 Enforcing and Breaking gender stereotypes

Teachers' perceptions reveal gender stereotyping in their teaching in two dimensions; first, enforcing gender stereotypes and second, breaking gender stereotypes.

In the case of enforcing gender stereotypes, teachers' perceptions indicate that they enforce gender stereotyping and reproduce gender roles in their teaching, which demonstrate the societal influence on teachers' classroom practice. This result aligns with research conducted by scholars whose work confirm the importation of the social construct of the society into the classroom (Ifegbesan, 2010, p. 29; Raghav et al., 2014, p.73). These perceptions affirm lack of adequate understanding of gender stereotyping regarding teaching (Daoust et al., 2012, p. 53; UNESCO, 2015, p.40). Thus, teachers' awareness on gender sensitive pedagogy allows for a more conscious and holistic implementation of gender responsive teaching for quality improvement (Korenius, 2018, p.16; Mlama et al., 2005, p.4).

Regarding breaking gender stereotypes, the results also reveal that with the understanding of gender teachers have the potential to break gender stereotypes in their classroom practice. These findings are similar to literature that emphasises breaking gender stereotypes through the conscious use of non-stereotypic expressions, assigning students to take up non-stereotypic gender roles, use gender-neutral language and also open discussions with boys and girls on the importance of breaking gender stereotypes to provide a broad spectrum of life opportunities (Ifegbesan, 2010, p.36; Unal et al., 2018, p.43).

5.1.2 Teachers' and students' interactions

Teachers' perceptions of learners influence the implementation of gender sensitivity in classroom practice. This means that it shapes boys and girls learning, achievement and future perspectives. From the results

of the present study, teachers perceive spending much time with students in and out of the classrooms and at varying extent. These findings confirm Korenius's and Gauthier's assertion that the students spend more time with teachers than parents and as such, teachers have a great influence on students' impressions, reflections, achievement and life expectations (Gauthier, 2004, p.3; Korenius, 2018, p.16). However, the findings indicate that both male and female teachers perceive interacting more often with girls than boys. From the study at hand and in the context of students' participation in the classroom, teachers' perceptions show the active participation of girls, boys' passivity, and reluctance to learning and also boys' oppressive tendencies over girls. Regarding the active participation of girls, the results are consistent with studies that reveal girls' active participation in learning and outpacing boys academically due to their potential to take initiative, collaborate and seek assistance (Phoenix, 2004, p. 33; UNESCO, 2015, p. 44; Younger et al., 1999, p. 339). Meanwhile the passivity and reluctance of boys to learning ties with literature which opines that boys prefer autonomy and competition, influenced by dangerous masculinity and this attitude contributes to their low academic performance (Phoenix, 2004, p. 35; Unal et al., 2018, p. 43; Younger et al., 1999, p. 339). Furthermore, the oppressive attitude of boys in the classroom is consistent with literature which highlights the societal influence of male dominance and female subordination (Fielding, 2014, p. 2; Longwe, 1998, p. 19).

This understanding is pertinent for teachers to develop teaching strategies that encourage and value boys and girls equally in the implementation of gender sensitive

pedagogy. On another score, results of the study also indicate that boys and girls collaborate to learn in higher classes, especially in small group interactions which conforms with findings that reveal small group tasks as a strategy to encourage boys' participation and improvement in learning achievement (UNESCO, 2015, p. 44; Younger et al., 1999, p. 339).

5.1.3 The influence of positive Teachers' attitude

In the study at hand, the positive change of attitude by teachers stimulates both boys and girls to confide in teachers and this influences their classroom participation, self-esteem and learner outcome. These results coincide with other studies which emphasize the influence of teachers' positive attitude on students' classroom participation, self-image and achievement (Kabeer, 2005, p.17; Mlama et al., 2005, p. 8; Tanyi, 2016, pp. 212-213; UNESCO, 2015, p.40). Therefore, teachers' reflections about their own attitudes towards learners become pertinent in the implementation of gender sensitive pedagogy. Furthermore, the findings show the positive influence of teachers' attitudes in responding to the gender specific needs of boys and girls, which reflects support and welfare, an integral part of quality in teaching (Daoust et al., 2012, p.12; Saito, 2011, p. 1). The result regarding responding to gender specific needs of learners is consistent with the findings of Mlama et al. (2005, p. 19), Daoust et al. (2012, p. 54) and Korenius (2018, p. 9) which emphasize the need for teachers' deeper reflection on gender specific needs of boys and girls as a measure of teaching quality improvement from a gender perspective.

5.1.4 Students' involvement in subject areas

Students' interest and commitment to engage in a subject largely depends on the teachers' attitude and approach in teaching (OECD, 2009b, p. 90). The study at hand shows that for the most part, girls outpace boys in classroom participation and academic performance in science and language. This insinuates gender inequality in favour of girls. In the case of science, the result, contradicts literature (Agyepong, 2001, p.37; McClure et al., 2017, p.23) which reveal that boys outpace girls. However, the result is consistent with studies, which show that girls outpace boys in language learning (MSI & EQATE, 2008, p.5; UNESCO, 2015, p.44). Girls' performance gives the impression that despite the challenges they encounter in sub-Saharan Africa and Cameroon in particular, when given the opportunity of access and basic provision they thrive (UNESCO, 2015, p.12). On the contrary, literature indicates that for the most part girls lag due to the challenges they experience in school (Daoust et al., 2012, p. 47; Korenius, 2018, p. 9).

In the case of participation and academic performance in the humanities, results show that both boys and girls participate equally and perform equitably an indication of gender equality and gender equity. This situation reflects teachers' potential to adequately implement gender responsiveness in their own teaching provided they are trained. These results are in conformity with literature which emphasises the importance of teacher professional development to enhance teaching quality for all learners to learn equally (Bregman, 2008, p.45; UNESCO, 2014, p.37; UNESCO, 2015, p.40; UNESCO, 2017, p.12).

5.1.5 Adapting the curriculum and learning resources

The results of the study at hand reveal that the curriculum prescribed by the ministry of education in Cameroon is inadequate to address gender concerns and rather promotes the gender bias against women and girls (Fielding, 2014, p.2).

Furthermore, it also reveals that its relevance to the present and future needs of the society is questionable. These results are similar to results of many studies that confirm the gender insensitivity of the curriculum which reproduces gender differentiation, portraying male dominance and female subordination (Agyepong, 2001, pp. 31-32; Fielding, 2014, p.2; Kabee, 2005, p. 17; UNESCO, 2015, p.42). Meanwhile, the findings also reveal that teachers perceive the learning resources as gender biased in favour of boys. These results are consistent with literature, which indicates that for the most part learning resources are gender biased against females. (Ellemers, 2018, p.284; Mlana et al., 2005, p. 9; Sakki et al., 2010, p.71).

Therefore, adapting the curriculum and the learning resources to be relevant and gender sensitive becomes pertinent for the appropriate implementation of gender responsiveness in teachers' classroom practice. The findings confirm the importance of training in the successful implementation of gender sensitive pedagogy. From the purposefully selected interviewees, only two have in-service training on gender awareness in education, although they all experienced in-service trainings. The trained teachers were able to recognize gender insensitivity in the curriculum and learning resources, an indicator of the relevance of teacher professional development on gender sensitive

pedagogy (UNESCO, 2015, p. 40; Unal et al., 2018, p. 43). The results tie with studies that emphasise the pertinence of pre-service and in-service teacher trainings on gender and education, to narrow the gender gap in teaching and the improvement of education quality (Korenius, 2018, p.17; UNESCO, 2016, p.264).

5.2 Life skills education as a mitigating strategy

In this section the reflection focuses on the discussion of the results regarding the gender related challenges teachers experience in teaching. Concurrently, the reflection also highlights possible strategies to surmount the challenges and improve the teaching quality.

Life skills education is the bases of understanding gender dynamics that enable teachers to better manage gender-related challenges (WHO, 2019, p. 24). In addition, life skills improve on learners' attitudes regarding violence and aggressiveness, increases social and cognitive competences and the ability to manage emotional issues (WHO, 2019, p. 27). Thus, the reflection focuses on romantic relationships, managing adolescents and gender-based violence as some of the challenge's teachers encounter. Meanwhile corresponding mitigating measure are also examined.

5.2.1 Romantic relationships

Romantic relationships considered as risky health behaviours in the school milieu (UNICEF, 2011, p. 22; Wood et al., 2015, p. 672), pose a challenge for teachers. From the findings it is experienced at two levels; first, between male students and female students and second, between male teachers and female students. These

results are consistent with other studies which reveal that romantic relationships affect learning, achievement and life aspirations especially that of girls if they become pregnant (Daoust et al., 2012, p. 35; Mlama et al., 2005, p. 22; UNICEF, 2011, p.22; Wood et al., 2015, p.672).

Meanwhile, at the level of romantic relations between male teachers and female students, the findings also indicate how such relationships become a challenge to female teachers as the girls in such relationships reflect pride, show disrespect, compete with female teachers and even challenge them. This leads to tensions between female students and female teachers creating a school climate that is unfavourable for learning (OECD, 2009a, p.6). On the other hand, the relationships between male teachers and female students could be considered as sexual exploitation (Daoust, et al., 2012, p.35; UNICEF, 2011, p.31) with huge negative consequences on the female students including low academic performance, dropout, ill health, pregnancy or death from unsafe abortion (Mlama et al., 2005, p.22; UNICEF, 2011, p.22). Furthermore, the romantic relationships at both levels reflect the social construct of unequal power relations between males and females (Sultana & Sohaimi bin Lazim, 2011, p.168). Therefore, empowering the females and breaking gender stereotypes of female subordination and male dominance contributes to females being able to take informed decisions and make informed choices about their own lives. This is achieved through gender sensitive and life skills education which equips teachers and students to create healthy relationships and interactions that provide a conducive and cohesive learning environment (WHO, 2019, p.27; Wood et al., 2015, p.672).

5.2.2 Management of adolescents and Gender Identity

One of the gender-related challenges perceived by teachers is based on managing adolescents, since secondary school teachers deal with adolescent learners. In this light, the biological and psychological peculiarities of adolescents influence their actions, reflections and expressions (Mlama et al., 2005, p.22; McNeely & Blanchard, 2009, p.15). The research at hand reveals that teachers perceive the manifestation of aggressiveness, resistance, strength and other deviant behaviours amongst adolescent boys and girls. The results support the findings that confirm such behaviours due to natural and hormone-controlled characteristics of adolescents (Mlama et al., 2005, p.19). Therefore, understanding foundation of these strange behaviours becomes crucial to seeking solutions. Thus, the results of the present study reveal that teachers trained in life skills education seem to better manage gender related challenges through the manifestation of equal, equitable and healthy relationships with boys and girls in and out of the classroom.

These results are consistent with research findings that show the influence of teachers' and students' understanding of life skills on school and classroom climate (WHO, 2019, p.27). This means that with the understanding and implementation of gender sensitive pedagogy and incorporating life skills, teachers are inspired to teach and all learners are motivated to learn, thus improving the learners' outcome for all (Scheerens, 2004, p.42) and closing the gender gap in achievement between boys and girls.

Therefore, the pertinence of integrating life skills education in teacher trainings to mitigate gender related challenges teachers experience (Wood et al., 2015, p.672).

5.2.3 Gender-based violence

Another challenge teachers' perceive in the study at hand is the presence of gender-based violence in various forms in schools and classrooms and its consequences. This finding is consistent with findings that confirm the existence of gender-based violence in education institutions and its negative impact on school climate as also learning and academic achievement especially of victims (Daoust, et al., 2012, p.35). From the study at hand, violence is visible at three levels; first, physical and emotional violence perpetrated by male teachers on male students, second, physical and psychological violence between male teachers and female teachers and third, sexual abuse of female students linked to close partner violence (WHO, 2019, p.26; Wood et al., 2015, p.672).

At the first level of physical and psychological violence, the findings insinuate teachers' unorthodox means of classroom control using corporal punishment which begets more violence. This result ties with studies which show the negative effect of corporal punishment on learning not undermining human rights violation (UNESCO, 2004, p.31; WHO, 2019, p.37). In the case of violence between male and female teachers, the result is consistent with findings which indicate gender-based violence in schools and classrooms due to gender power relations (Daoust et al., 2012, p.35; Mlama et al., 2005, p.22) in conformity with findings which assert the influence of unequal power relations between males and females and its consequences

(Raghav et al., 2014, p.1; Sultana & Sohaimi bin Lazim, 2011, p.168). Meanwhile, the findings suggest that the violence between male and female teachers is linked to tensions that arise due to romantic relationships between male teachers and female students. Regarding sexual exploitation, the results align with studies which reveal the devastating consequences on victims (UNESCO, 2011, p.22). Meanwhile, the overall school climate becomes unfavourable for teaching and learning (Daoust et al., 2012, p.36; Mlama et al., 2005, p.22).

To overcome gender-based violence is a huge challenge in the context of Cameroon because, victims remain silent, especially women and girls for fear of stigmatization (Daoust, et al., 2012, p.36). Therefore, developing strategies for prevention, sensitisation and breaking the gender stereotype of silence in the face of gender-based violence becomes crucial. This is consistent with results of other studies which stress the necessity for victims of gender-based violence to speak out and expose perpetrators so that appropriate sanctions are meted (Daoust, et al., 2012, p. 36; WHO, 2019, p.31). Thus, curbing gender-based violence requires that teachers' and students' understand their rights, responsibilities and obligations towards one and other in the school setting. This could be accomplished by incorporating life skills education in gender sensitive pedagogy.

6.

CONCLUSIONS

The conclusion chapter articulates on two key aspects the reflection on the conclusion, to make visible the overarching answer to the research question of how secondary school teachers in Cameroon perceive gender in their own teaching, and the description of the recommendations for education praxis and further research on the field.

6.1 Conclusion from findings

The conclusion provides a summary of the study in the light of the results. Therefore, based on the results, the overarching conclusion resides in the understanding of gender by secondary school teachers and their classroom practice. In this light, teachers' perceptions of gender show a partial understanding of gender in the light of gender equality, gender equity, and gender stereotyping which influences their teaching (Daoust et al., 2012, p.54).

This means that for the most part, gender differentiation of boys and girls is evident in teaching, with girls outpacing boys in informal interactions with teachers, participation in learning and academic performance. This gender differentiation in favour of girls uncovers the gender constraints and gender biases that boys experience in the classroom practice of teachers in the present study.

It further shows the contradictions and the complexities of understanding insights regarding research findings. In this study, the situation is likely different, due to the urban location of the schools and the non-state public secondary school type, confirming Sunderland's assertion that results of research vary depending on the context, and the respondents. (Sunderland, 2000, p. 164). Nonetheless, this gender differentiation reflects the limitation in the implementation of gender sensitive pedagogy in teaching. Furthermore, the perceptions of teachers trained on gender in education indicate the understanding of gender and a better influence on their teaching as they provide individual support to boys and girls and cultivate a positive school climate which reflects quality teaching that contributes to reduce the gender gap in teaching and enhances educational quality. Meanwhile, romantic relationships, managing adolescents and gender-based violence are gender-related challenges teachers experience in teaching, having huge consequences on school climate, self-esteem. and learner achievement.

6.2 Recommendations for educational practices

These recommendations are aimed at improving the teaching quality through gender sensitive pedagogy and life skills education, to bridge the gender gap in teaching and enhance educational quality. In this light, the findings reveal the impact of teacher training on gender sensitivity and life skills education and their influence on classroom practice. Thus, policies that ensure the incorporation and reproduction of gender and life skills education in pre-service and in-service teacher trainings become crucial for reducing the gender differentiation in teaching. Also, school

leadership support in the implementation, follow-up and supervision of gender sensitive and life skills classroom practice and the promotion of a gender sensitive school culture are salient. Meanwhile, strategies for the effective implementation, supervision and evaluation of the existing policies regarding gender equality and gender equity in teaching become pertinent.

6.3 Recommendations for education research

In the light of the implications for educational science, the study creates avenues for further research to deepen on the conceptual and theoretical frameworks of gender to gain new insights that address the gender gap in teachers' classroom practice as a contribution to teaching quality which assures educational quality. Thus, this study sought to investigate the perceptions of gender in the classroom practice of secondary school teachers in non-state faith-based public secondary schools in the urban setting in Cameroon. To this end, further research could investigate teachers' perceptions of gender in state public secondary schools, to gain more insights and add to the knowledge base of gender sensitive education in Cameroon. On another score, teachers could conduct self-assessment classroom projects (Sunderland, 2000, p.157) to investigate gender sensitivity in their own teaching for self-improvement. In the same vein, further research could explore the perceptions of students regarding gender in teachers' classroom practice as a contribution to science. Meanwhile, the role of policy makers, teacher educators, school leaders and educators, becomes crucial to utilize the empirical evidence from the study for school quality improvement and enhancement of education quality.

Finally, although the results of the present study indicate girls outpacing boys in classroom participation and academic performance, empowering girls through quality education for the sustainable development of the society remains crucial (Brookfield, 2013, p.5; Ombati & Ombati, 2012, p.132) while not losing sight of improving on the decline in the academic performance of boys (UNESCO, 2015, p.44). Therefore, achieving gender equality and gender equity in education requires a joint effort of males and females (Monkman, 2017, p.206; UNESCO, 2016, p.264) as they partner and complement each other for the sustainable development of the society (Daoust et al., 2012, p.12; UNESCO, 2005, p.4; UNGEI, 2012, p.3).

APPENDIX

Research question and interview guide

Main question

How do secondary school teachers perceive gender in their teaching?

Sub-questions

1. What is the understanding of gender by secondary school teachers?
2. How does the understanding of gender by secondary school teachers influence their classroom practice?
3. What strategies do secondary school teachers develop to address the gender challenges in their classroom practice?

Interview guide

Thank you for accepting to share with me your experience on gender, as a Teacher. (*appeal for recording*). I am interested in gender issues and I will like to learn from your experience in the field. I know that you have much to share from your daily interactions with students that's why I come to learn from you about issues of gender.

Could you please tell me about your daily interaction with students? (*deepen in the case of classroom*)

A moment ago, you said... (*gender, gender equality, gender inequality, gender equity, gender balance, gender imbalance, gender disparity, gender gap*)

Gender and Quality Education

In your daily interaction, how is it with boys and with girls?

Tell me more, I want to learn from it ...

How do you do this?

A moment ago, you mentioned..., now, tell me more about your interactions during lessons

how do boys see themselves, how do girls see themselves and how do boys see girls in regard to (subject)?

As a ... teacher you make use of learning resources in teaching. Tell me your experience in using these resources

How do you do this?

Tell me (examples)

As a teacher of ..., share with me your experience with students in regard to ...?

Could you please tell me the challenges you face in dealing with boys and girls in school?

You said... (how do you deal with these challenges? Tell me? (examples)

You said...

Could you explain further ...

In your work experience as a ... (subject) teacher, is there anything else you will like to tell me in regard to gender?

If more than one Appendix is included, please number them with Roman numbers, begin new page for each Appendix.

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Abstract

Quality education is the key to sustainable development and encompasses several dimensions including the gender perspective. Females have been left behind in the development process which creates a gender gap. Studies show that empowering females through quality education, yields huge benefits to the society. However, the education gender gap in sub-Saharan Africa remains a challenge. Thus, the problem of the gender gap in teaching is addressed in this study, to investigate secondary school teachers' perceptions of gender in their own teaching, using qualitative methods. From the findings, teachers' perceptions of gender influence their classroom practice and remains a challenge due to inadequate training. Interestingly, teachers' perceptions indicate that girls outpace boys in learning and academic performance. Strategies to address gender-related challenges in teaching, implications for educational praxis and education research are also highlighted. Therefore, this book provides useful insights regarding gender and quality education in secondary schools of Cameroon that address the problem of the gender gap in teaching. The book contributes to the quality dimension of the gender perspective in teachers' classroom practice and targets education scholars, teacher educators and education policy makers in countries of sub-Saharan Africa.

Key words: Gender, gender gap, quality education, life skill education, teachers' classroom practice.

L'éducation de qualité est la clé du développement durable et englobe plusieurs dimensions, y compris la perspective du genre. Les femmes ont été laissées pour compte dans

le processus de développement, ce qui crée un écart entre les sexes. Des études montrent que l'autonomisation des femmes grâce à une éducation de qualité, produit d'énormes avantages pour la société. Toutefois, l'écart entre les sexes en matière d'éducation en Afrique subsaharienne demeure un défi. Ainsi, le problème de l'écart entre les sexes dans l'enseignement est abordé dans cette étude, afin d'étudier la perception du genre par les enseignants du secondaire dans leur propre enseignement, en utilisant des méthodes qualitatives. D'après les résultats, les perceptions des enseignants à l'égard du genre influencent leur pratique en classe et demeurent un défi en raison d'une formation inadéquate. Fait intéressant, les perceptions des enseignants indiquent que les filles dépassent les garçons en matière d'apprentissage et de rendement scolaire. Des stratégies visant à relever les défis liés au genre en matière d'enseignement, d'implications pour la pratique de l'éducation et la recherche en éducation sont également mises en évidence. Par conséquent, ce livre fournit des informations utiles sur le genre et la qualité de l'éducation dans les écoles secondaires du Cameroun qui abordent le problème de l'écart entre les sexes dans l'enseignement. L'ouvrage contribue à la dimension qualitative de la perspective de genre dans la pratique des enseignants en classe et s'adresse aux chercheurs en éducation, aux formateurs d'enseignants et aux décideurs en matière d'éducation dans les pays d'Afrique subsaharienne.

Mots clés: Genre, écart entre les sexes, éducation de qualité, éducation aux compétences de vie, pratique en classe des enseignants.

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