

A Short Note on Gender Justice and Education

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Commentary

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ABOUT THE STUDY

This special issue examines the subject of gender in education from two perspectives: first, how non-state organizations have approached gender and education concerns, and second, how these organizations have engaged with various approaches to the concept of gender justice. In this introduction, we analyze the growth of non-state organizations, notably Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), as settings in which initiatives for gender justice, itself a highly controversial concept, are negotiated in order to contextualize the papers in this special issue. One component of this topic is whether gender justice discourses are descriptive, referring to what specific types of organizations and their players do, or normative, using a different language. We review a number of theoretical approaches on gender justice to see how they may assist us understand how non-state organizations work on gender inequality and education in order to try to untangle some of this.

Public policy and legislation were among the first to use the phrase gender justice, with an investigation into whether primary and secondary education caused gendered inequities as a starting point. This project demonstrated how many issues relating to gender and justice necessitated a deeper investigation than a look at the situation on the ground. However, as previously stated, such research necessitates the integration of normative and non-normative viewpoints. It must concentrate on a variety of levels and domains, including institutional and legal, economic, political, cultural, and familial, as well as subjective and relational levels. This is a challenging task. The papers in this issue have all attempted to focus on education, and they examine how diverse approaches to gender justice, as viewed in various ways, inform the work of non-state organisations working in a variety of situations. All of the papers examine the opportunities and restrictions for achieving various aspects of gender justice, as well as certain theoretical concerns and practical limitations of such viewpoints. The papers also look at some of the methodological problems that come with researching gender with and on NGOs' partners.

These methodological concerns generate normative and process issues that are critical for deepening both our theoretical understanding of gender equity and our discussions about how to achieve this aim in education practise. The involvement of Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) in gender and education has a long history.

114 Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) attended the inaugural UN conference on women, held in Mexico in 1975, as observers to the debates between countries, UN entities, and intergovernmental organisations. It was the action of women in NGOs that, beginning in 1972, formed the UN NGO Committee on the Status of Women and began to drive a politics seeking more equality for women in education, the economy, political and cultural representation from governments and UN organisations. While the word "gender justice" does not appear to have been used in academic or policy writings in the 1970s, one triumph of the decade was the use of the legal system to address inequalities. The UN's Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), which was adopted in 1979 and ratified by almost all governments in the following years, and which was monitored by a combination of national and international processes in which governments and NGOs took part, established legal and institutional reform as a key terrain for gender equality and women's rights. Justice was implicitly a place for gender equality and women's rights, as well as a method for securing and affirming them. Political philosophy and legal theory, on the other hand, had a restricted conceptual language for thinking about gender at the time.