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**IMAGES OF WOMEN  
IN THE A-LEVEL LITERATURE  
TAUGHT IN TANZANIAN SECONDARY SCHOOLS  
AND THEIR IMPLICATIONS FOR  
DEVELOPMENT**

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## ABSTRACT

Traditionally in Tanzania gendered education was carried out by family members and 'elders', with the purpose of equipping young people with the skills and knowledge they would need to play a complete role in their society. Contact with Arab traders led to the adoption of Islam in some communities and the establishment of Koranic schools. With Christianity and the colonial administration; first by Germany and later by Britain, came Western formal education. Women had little access to either of these forms of education however and were not admitted in large numbers to schools until the socialist education policies of the post independence government were put into place.

Despite these policies, society's discriminatory attitudes towards women continued to mitigate women's advancement to higher education. This has helped to lead to women's low status in society, the lack of recognition for their contributions to that society and their inability to shape the development of Tanzania on an equal basis with men.

Within the education system women and girls suffer many disadvantages which contribute to their lack of academic success. Not least of these is a biased curriculum which is particularly evident in the content of school text books and reading material.

Books in the A level literature in English syllabus are all written by men and an analysis of the content of the eight most frequently used books shows the predominance of negative images of women and gender relations which denigrate and devalue women and girls. These negative images, internalised by the female students, prevent them achieving the goals of the syllabus and may contribute to low self esteem and their subsequent low representation in tertiary institutions.

Books written by African women writers, which portray more positive images of women and alternative gender relations, are available and would be valuable additions to the syllabus for both male and female students.

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

This research, and the thesis arising from it, stem from a combination of my background in literature teaching – a first degree in English and many years in the teaching profession – and my work and intense interest in the ‘development’ process.

The disadvantages experienced by female students in developing countries, including Tanzania, and their low rate of enrolment in upper secondary school and tertiary institutions, particularly university, are well documented ( Ballara 1995, Leach 1998). The serious concern this situation gives rise to was expressed to me at the Gender Studies Conference organised and run by the Tanzania Gender Networking Programme (TGNP) in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, in December 1996. Women, who received their higher education in the 1970s and the early 1980s, many of whom now hold important positions in and outside government, expressed extreme concern that their daughters and other young women were not ‘following in their footsteps’, but were, in fact, failing within the education system.

It was clear that there are many factors contributing to this failure some of which have been researched and well documented. However, it was also clear that more research was needed. One area identified as needing research was the gender bias of the curriculum and the need to develop a ‘female friendly’ curriculum. In 1991 a review workshop was held in Dar es Salaam with the objective of summarising and assessing critically the available knowledge on women in the education system, and of mapping out implications for support policy such as orientation of support, areas of emphasis, needed research and appropriate methodologies. The summary report (Mbilinyi M. and Mbughuni P. Eds.) of the workshop, entitled “Education in Tanzania with a Gender Perspective”, lists recommended research topics, the seventh of which is: - Investigate the attributes of a ‘female friendly’ curriculum in different subjects and work out strategies for creating and implementing it.

Discussions which I held at that time with women from TGNP, the University of Dar es Salaam and the Curriculum Development Unit of the Ministry of Education, Tanzania, encouraged me to embark upon my research in which I planned to investigate the

English Literature syllabus for A level students for evidence of gender bias and, if this was found, to endeavour to show links between this and the perceived low self esteem of female students, their poor performance in the A level exams and their consequent low rate of enrolment at university.

I perceived the problem to be – ‘The low number of well qualified, highly motivated women to contribute to the development of Tanzania.’ The thesis upon which the qualitative research was based was –

‘Do the images of women created by the literature in English studied at A level in Tanzanian secondary schools contribute to a low self-image of girls and young women and thus lead to their failure to reach their potential as major contributors to the development of Tanzania?’

Specifically, I set out to answer the following questions –

- What images of women are created by the set texts in the A level English syllabus?
- What are the possible effects of such images on students?
- Do the students recognise and question negative images of women?
- Do the students internalise the images of women? If so, what are the possible long term effects of this?
- Do the female students studying A level English find the set texts relevant, enjoyable and interesting?
- Assuming that at least some of the books do create negative images of women, are there books available which would –
  - a) portray more positive images of women, e g, show them in decision making positions having an influence on society in general, as well as domestically, and contributing to the development of their families and nations.
  - b) question the roles assigned to women in traditional African society.
- Would students relate to and enjoy such books?

My expectation was that gender bias would be found and would be seen to have a negative effect on female students. My hope was that identifying this would lead to a

change in the syllabus and the introduction of some new literature which would promote gender equality.

By living and working in Tanzania for the two years during which I conducted my research, I was able to have access to local education and development research publications and to hold discussions with women and men with similar concerns to mine. Through this, I was able to place my research in the context of ongoing concern for the situation of women in Tanzania, the continuing difficulty of girl's access to higher education and gender bias in the curriculum as a whole.

My research has two parts. Initially I carried out a documentary review, reading and analysing, from a gendered perspective, the books on the syllabus. I also read widely to identify other books with positive images of women and alternative gender relations.

The second part of the research was to administer questionnaires, based on the most commonly taught books, in five A level literature classes in different secondary schools. The sample is described in Chapter 6. The questions aimed to elicit responses from female and male students to the taught literature with the emphasis on character and relationships as portrayed by the authors. I also held informal discussions with literature students, literature teachers and head teachers when ever possible.

As background to my specific research I surveyed the history of education in Tanzania, which is covered in Chapter 2. In Chapter 3 I have outlined the situation of women in Tanzania, set in a global context, and then focused on their situation with regard to education in Chapter 4. Chapters 5 and 6 deal with my own research. The documentary review is followed by the results of the questionnaires together with my comments and conclusions based on these results. Finally, in Chapter 7 I detail my conclusions from the study as a whole and make some recommendations.

Since Tanzania is striving to develop its society into one in which each individual has the opportunity to develop her or his potentialities and to lead a fulfilling life, the identification and correction of factors that prevent this should be of value to the nation.

## CHAPTER 2

### EDUCATION IN TANZANIA – ITS DEVELOPMENT AND ITS ROLE IN DEVELOPMENT

Since what has happened in the field of education in the past has affected and brought about the current situation, and because education is recognised as an agent of development, it is necessary to look at the history of education in Tanzania before embarking on a study of a specific aspect of it. In this chapter I shall consider the importance of education in relation to development, its provision, before and after independence, and the political, social and economic factors which have influenced this and led to a decline in the quality and quantity of education available in 2000.

Pre-colonial Tanzanian society had developed its own system of education based on the way of life and systems of production. Informal education began at an early age and reflected the division of labour by sex. Female relatives taught girls the skills and techniques of crop cultivation, child care, food processing and preparation and crafts. Similarly, male relatives instructed boys in the skills related to their work and activities. Children learned by 'doing' and helping their elders. The purpose of the traditional training of young people was to transmit a common culture and the prevailing gender based division of labour. Thus, this type of education simultaneously fulfilled both a culturally cohesive and a socio-economically differentiating role and ensured the ongoing functioning of the society (Buchert 1994:15).

Most tribal groups also had formal systems of education usually based on initiating girls and boys separately into the adult society, and carried out by the elders of the society. This took place at the time of puberty and often culminated in circumcision. The training was usually carried out in a separate place and sometimes lasted as long as three years (Mbilinyi 1982: 76/77).

Colonial expansion into East Africa, in the case of Tanganyika by Germany, was spear-headed by commercial interests and intensified in the 1880s by the business recession experienced in Europe. Together with commercial development, came the missionaries who perceived their role as one of 'civilising' the indigenous people through conversion to Christianity and the promotion of agriculture and commerce. Colonial governing

bodies were established partly in response to the need of the commercial investors for protection of their interests ( Hunsdorfer 1982:2-4).

‘Civilising’ schools were established by the missionaries and, once the colonial state was formed, they served to support it by expanding their activities to include the development of German culture and thought.

Arab traders had been visiting East Africa since the 1300s and a trading relationship, encompassing the slave trade, had been built up. As Arab traders settled and Islam became established, Islamic educational institutions had been set up. The colonial government made use of these, and the mission schools, to provide educated manpower prior to the establishment of government schools.

The mission school system had a pyramid structure with a broad base of bush schools where classes of two years’ duration taught literacy, numeracy and church doctrine. The schools were built by the local people on their land and the teachers were African catechists. The missions also had central, boarding schools in which a few young people could study, for a further four or six years, a mostly vocational curriculum, related to the needs of the mission and reinforced by manual labour. This ‘education’ was designed to foster adaptation to work relations of exploitation and domination in adult life.

In a similar fashion, the few government schools which were established, directed their teaching to specific manpower needs and consequently entry was restricted to boys; specifically the sons of chiefs or wealthy Africans, and thus contributed to a stratification process in society and internalisation of a capitalist, racist and sexist ideology. The German administration’s interest in education derived from its growing need for middle level administration staff who could provide a proper level of communication, and for technical personnel who could secure economic development in the territory.

After the First World War, the former German East Africa became a British mandate with the British administration responsible for law and order and the rights and interests of the local people. As a member of the new League of Nations, they were required to promote the material, moral, and social progress of the local population. British colonial schooling continued on very similar lines to that of the German administration. Table 2.1 shows the emphasis on primary education and on boys’ education as late as 1956.

TABLE 2.1 Enrolment in the Education System, 1956 ( Voluntary Agencies, Government and Native Authorities combined)

	Total	Girls
Primary School (Standard 1-4)	336 000	105 000
Middle school (Standard 5-8)	28 000	4 900
Secondary School (Standard 9-12)	2409	204

Source: Hinzen and Hunsdorfer 1982: 85.

Three separate systems, divided on racial lines, developed to provide education for the 'leaders' and for the 'masses'. Most European children returned to Europe for higher education. An Asian system developed, mainly through the financial input of the Asian communities, and it concentrated on a literary / classical education. Until 1937 African education was limited to standard six and continued to emphasise vocational training.

The three separate systems served to reinforce the divisions already established within the society by the colonists. The 'African' education system functioned to produce submissiveness, a sense of inferiority, an orientation towards extrinsic rewards and punishments and an ideological acceptance of capitalist work demands. Even for the majority, who never had schooling, the system worked to reproduce acceptance of the superiority of those who were educated and their right to a superior position in the colonial economy (Mbilinyi 1982: 79). The enormous differences in the amount of money spent on each student according to their race, as shown in Table 2.2, indicates the racist attitude and divisive potential of the colonial education system.

TABLE 2.2 Net Expenditure on Education in Tanganyika Territory, 1947

Race	Total Population	Students in School	Enrolment as percentage of race	Government Expenditure in pounds	Expenditure per student in pounds
African	5 480 391	113 198	2.1	251 000	2.2
Asian	50 332	9 831	19.5	51 000	5.2
European	14 727	958	6.5	36 000	37.6

Source: Annual Report of Education Dept., Tanganyika 1947.

In the light of events in India, colonial administrators feared amalgamation of the systems would give rise to the Asians raising the political awareness of the Africans. In fact, 'divide and rule' type policies, designed to foster tribalism, were introduced in some areas (Mbilinyi 1982: 79/90).

During the 'Great Depression' the small amount of money being spent on 'African' Education was further reduced and higher education opportunities limited as 'Education for Adaptation', as practised in the U.S.A., was emphasised. In Africa this implied an emphasis on the development of the rural sector. The land was seen as the African's natural vocation and agricultural education as a means of preventing the production of educated unemployed. Lene Buchert, (1994: 31), suggests that, as a concept, Education for Adaptation had strong political implications. The British administration relied for its implementation on the native authorities and the missionary societies thus preserving the traditional political structure and a local community- oriented education that disregarded the socio-economic dynamics of the African peasant sector (pg.31). The knowledge and skills provided may have improved the agricultural techniques but they did not lead to higher technological levels or changes in social structures.

At the same time, the system was called upon to provide better qualified Africans to work in government departments and private businesses. This led, eventually, to an improvement in the school curriculum and an increase in students attending secondary schools. English was now the medium of instruction in secondary schools and the setting and marking of examinations was carried out by the Cambridge Syndicate.

In the period from 1950 up to Independence, despite colonial administrators' fears of a replication of the 'Indian situation', a growing political consciousness among the African people and an administrative focus on 'modernisation' as a development theory and process led to the withdrawal of the Education for Adaptation influenced curriculum. Parents in the rural areas expected education to secure wage earning jobs for their children and also expected opportunities equal to those of urban students. The establishment in 1954 of TANU (Tanganyika African National Union) led to pressure on the colonial administration to provide schooling for all children and the shift in emphasis to literacy, in turn, led to more students receiving a secondary education. However education was still designed to perpetuate the class and cultural bias of the existing social system. Policy statements and implementation failed to tally and non-African communities, which were more politically influential, and were seen as the preferred political partners of the future, continued to receive preferential treatment.

Despite the fact that "the belief that Britain had global responsibilities as a great power died very hard and very late" ( Austin 1980 ) the colonists' fears were well founded. The increased access to education led to a growing national awareness, an anti-colonial

reaction, and a unified movement towards self government. Contrary to its designed purpose, education became a tool for political liberation.

Tanganyika gained its independence on the 9th. of December 1961. Dissatisfaction with the limitations of the inherited education policies and a strong belief in education as the key to national development led to immediate expansion of the provision of schooling. Table 2.3 shows the situation inherited by TANU at Independence. The enrolment figures indicate the heavy emphasis on primary schooling and on boys' education in line with the colonial administration's needs. Very few boys, and no girls, continued their education at secondary school.

TABLE 2.3 School Enrolment Figures, 1961

	Standard/ Form	Public Enrolment	Private Enrolment
Primary School: Standard	1	121 386	23 334
	4	95 391	4 206
	5	19 721	3 120
	8	11 732	757
Secondary School: Form	1	4 196	-
	4	1 603	-
High School: Form	5	326	-
	6	176	-

Source: Hinzen and Hundsdorfer 1982:99

In 1960 a UN sponsored 'Conference of African States on the Development of Education in Africa' had articulated education needs and goals, in relation to economic and social development, and suggested action for the period 1960-1980.

Undoubtedly, the inspiration and driving force for the establishment of education as 'education, for development' was the leader (later to become President of the nation) of TANU, Mwalimu Julius Nyerere. His own preference to be known as *mwalimu* (teacher) reflected his respect for education and the teaching role.

In writing of 'Aspects of Conception and Implementation' of the education policy post independence, H. Hinzen says, "If one looks at some aspects of education in Tanzania within the overall development process one will find that education and society are seen as being dialectically related to each other. On the one hand, the structure and content of

the education system depend on the socio- economic stage the society has reached..."(and he quotes Nyerere) "education cannot be considered apart from society. The formal school system cannot educate a child in isolation from the social and economic system in which it operates...." (1982: 5). Hinzen goes on to point out that on the other hand education is one of the key variables in the growth of the human potential to influence and bring about change and he quotes from Nyerere's 1969 New Year speech of 1969, ('Education Never Ends') "We must change our conditions of life ourselves, and we must learn how to do this by educating ourselves." Nyerere relates education to a concept of development in which development means "the development of people" (Hinzen 1982: 5).

Nyerere saw the purpose of education to be "to transmit from one generation to the next the accumulated wisdom and knowledge of the society, and to prepare the young people for their future membership of the society and their active participation in its maintenance or development" (Nyerere 1967: 33). By 1974 events had led to the addition to the definition of , "the primary purpose of education is the liberation of man" (Nyerere 1974: 43).

Education in Tanzania was, then, purpose oriented, as it had been under the colonial administration, but with a very different ideological base. As the perceived needs of the new nation changed, so too did the emphasis in education; from a capitalist inspired system to a system suitable for a socialist state. Prior to independence the provision of primary education had been continuously expanding due to pressure from TANU. After independence the major task was development of education at all levels. As the greatest need was for self sufficiency in manpower, the expansion of secondary education was stressed and, in turn, this influenced the type of primary education being delivered.

The Education Ordinance of 1961 led to several changes in the system. Primary schools were integrated racially and the new policy catered for all learners, irrespective of their racial, religious or economic origins. Firmer government control of all schools was introduced and, although individual private schools, such as those run by religious groups or tea companies, were allowed to continue, the Ministry of Education controlled appointment of teachers, syllabi, admission of students and provision of equipment.

During the period 1961-66 the curriculum was adapted to Tanzania's status as an independent state. It now included East African history and a local interpretation of the experience of colonisation. The Swahili language which, by a variety of means, had filtered inland from the coastal regions, was given more prominence and local culture was revived. 'Civics' was introduced in secondary schools to give students an understanding of the aims and organization of the new state. An 'all inclusive' policy was developed to prevent exclusion on grounds of gender, race, poverty or social position.

The 1964 Zanzibar revolution led to the amalgamation of the Zanzibar Islands and Tanganyika into The United Republic of Tanzania. Although the history of the islands and the mainland varied, from that time on they were to work together. Eventually their separate political parties amalgamated.

At the beginning of 1967, in the northern city of Arusha, President Nyerere delivered an important policy statement which became known as the 'Arusha Declaration'. It affirmed TANU's creed of building a democratic, socialist state and outlined the party's policies of socialism and self reliance. Shortly afterwards, in the spirit of independence and self reliance, a period of nationalisation began which included banks, the press, private property and, after the Education Act was passed in 1969, schools.

A policy paper entitled 'Education for Self Reliance' followed soon after the Arusha Declaration and was the first of a number of such papers and speeches which formed the philosophical base for the new direction which education was to take. Independence had led to a move from the world wide trend of 'manpower development', with its emphasis on science, technology and vocational subjects, to a more academic curriculum. This policy paper heralded a change from an academic emphasis to a more practical education with an underlying rationale which was both political and economic. Nyerere particularly wished to change and shape people's attitudes towards education which he saw as the means of personal liberation leading towards national liberation from dependency. He was conscious of the limitations placed on Tanzania's development by its poverty and was reluctant to form dependency relationships with the capitalist West. He believed education should help to build an egalitarian, socialist, non-exploitative society (Nyerere 1967). Practically, this included such things as developing a primary school curriculum which was complete in itself and not just a preparation for secondary school. The economic reality was that very few students would receive a secondary

education and even fewer would go on to the university. Nyerere stressed that ‘Further education for a selected few must be education for service to the many. There can be no other justification for taxing the many to give education to only a few’ (Nyerere, 1970).

Educational institutions were developed as integrated agencies of development, running small scale activities such as dairy and poultry projects, piggeries and vegetable gardens, in recognition of Tanzania’s agriculturally based economy. They taught people how to improve village life rather than to aspire to something else. Agricultural and other practical activities were designed to make schools and other educational institutes more self reliant, to produce good farmers and to counteract intellectual arrogance. Educational institutes were expected to develop a symbiotic relationship with their communities. Buchert (1994: 96), notes that ‘Self Reliance’, although fairly successful in achieving its aims, had a restricting effect on the development of post primary education and led to tension at the university.

In the period following the Arusha Declaration, The Ujamaa Policy was enacted. Subsistence farmers were moved from outlying homesteads to form larger villages. This gave all children the opportunity to attend primary school, as there was a school in each village. It also exposed adults to a variety of types of education. Nyerere’s view was that “the importance of adult education for our country cannot be over emphasised.” He stressed the importance of not accepting poor conditions as “the will of God” and encouraged people to change their circumstances through knowledge related to health, hygiene, diet, agriculture and child care and he saw literacy as a tool for gaining and transmitting that knowledge (Nyerere 1969/70). In the period 1971 –75 the government embarked on a literacy campaign, enrolling illiterates in adult literacy classes. Table 2.4 shows the rapid increase in enrolment over this period of time.

TABLE 2.4 Enrolment of illiterates in adult literacy classes, 1971-75

Year	Enrolment
1971	908 351
1972	1 508 204
1973	2 989 910
1974	3 303 103
1975	5 184 982

Source: Ministry of National Education Annual Reports on Adult Education 1971-75.

Nation-wide tests were held in 1975 to determine the success of the campaign. Considering that the classes were ongoing, the results of the tests, (shown in Table 2.5), which graded participants up to level four, showed that the campaign had achieved substantial progress towards eliminating illiteracy in Tanzania (Bwatwa 1982:139).

TABLE 2.5 Results of nation-wide literacy tests, 1975

	Males	Females	Total
3	548 287	578 906	1 127 193
4	405 457	376 361	781 818
Successful Literates	953 744	955 267	1 909 011

Source: Hinzen and Hunsdorfer 1982:139

Along with the drive for adult education came the establishment of vocational training institutions and an increase in training institutes for teachers, community development workers and agricultural and horticultural workers and advisers. Everyone with skills and knowledge was expected to share these with others by example and teaching. A high proportion of the older people in Tanzania today are able to read and write, despite never having attended schools as children, due to the adult literacy campaign. Table 2.6 illustrates the variety of teachers used in this national effort towards literacy.

TABLE 2.6 Number of people from various organizations teaching in non-formal education programmes organised by the Ministry of National Education, 1973.

Organization	No. of Teachers
Primary school teachers	20 672
Secondary school students	2 893
TANU	3 310
Ministry of Agriculture	1 129
Ministry of Health	1 575
Prime Minister's Office	4 449
Religious Bodies	644
Others	59 590
Total	94 262

Source: Ministry of National Education: Adult Education Statistics.

Speaking at the inauguration of the University of Dar es Salaam, formerly a constituent part of the University of East Africa, in 1970, Nyerere again stressed the needs of a developing socialist Tanzania and the role of the University as a community investment which should help to fulfil these needs (Nyerere 1970).

Above all, Nyerere claimed that it was the task of education in Africa, “to liberate the African from the mentality of slavery and colonialism by making him aware of himself as an equal member of the human race with the rights and duties of his humanity. It has to liberate him from the habit of submitting to circumstances which reduce his dignity as if they were immutable. And it has to liberate him from the shackles of technical ignorance...” (Nyerere 1970).

An additional outcome of these ideals was the establishment of the National Examinations Council of Tanzania in 1973 with the major objective of formulating examinations policy which would further Education for Self Reliance.

Meeting in 1974 to review the progress which had been made in transforming the education system, the TANU Executive Council passed further resolutions identifying the following three priority aims:-

- Universal Primary Education by 1977
- Eradication of illiteracy by 1980
- Self sufficiency in manpower requirements by 1980

From then on the party strove to achieve these aims.

Access to higher education remained very limited and was largely on the basis of ability and application. However, the introduction of a quota system and ‘free’ secondary education served to counteract regional and socio-economic differences to some extent, with many students coming from a peasant background. The entry examination continued to be in contention since it engendered a climate of failure for the majority of students.

Secondary education, like primary education, was free, and students were supported financially. Almost all schools were boarding establishments which drew their students from throughout the country. In this way children from different regions and tribal



percentage of educated parents who saw that education represented a good investment in a situation of restricted land.

There is no doubt, looking at the development of education from the perspective of 2000, that the 'dream', based on progressive and appropriate philosophies and policies such as Education for Self Reliance and Universal Primary Education, has not been fulfilled. I will attempt to show why this is so.

Since independence, despite policies of self reliance, Tanzania has been assisted by the international community especially in the social services sector, including education. However, Nyerere insisted on retaining the moral high ground in international relations and on resisting policy pressure from outside.

In the late 1970s and early 1980s Tanzania experienced great hardship due to the war against Idi Amin, falling crop prices in world markets, rising oil prices, drought and debt servicing. There was a considerable drop in incomes and in the standard of living of most Tanzanians.

In the early 1980s most of the bilateral and multilateral donors began to reduce financial support in order to force the Tanzanian Government to accept the Structural Adjustment Policies of the World Bank and IMF. These policies urged Tanzania to follow the global trend to 'liberalise' the economy and to privatise public enterprises as well as social services. The structural adjustment conditions included making drastic cuts in social expenditure and the introduction of user fees for health and education services (Muganda, 1996).

Resistance to these policies was reduced when Nyerere's term as President ended in 1985 and in 1987 Tanzania capitulated and adopted SAPs (Structural Adjustment Policies) as part of its economic recovery plan. These policies had a predictable, detrimental effect on social services. Faced by the economic crisis, the government had already been spending less and less on education, resulting in a shortage of basic resources in schools and a decline in morale among the teaching profession. The situation was exacerbated by SAPs. Of this situation Buchert (1994:147) says,

The priority given to the directly productive sectors, the emphasis on cost sharing and the reduced public responsibility for education in the context of structural adjustment all affected the previous central importance of education as a sector and the relative priority placed on its sub-sectors. This affected the former high importance of mass education,

in particular adult education, and the goal of equality in education, including aspects relating to gender.

Cornelia Muganda (1996), points out that the World Bank, despite the fact that it is a lending institution, has come to have a decisive influence on deciding education policy in Tanzania. In 1987 it produced a document 'Education Policies for Sub Saharan Africa: Adjustment Revitalisation and Expansion', which suggested an education policy framework for adoption by countries in Sub Saharan Africa, including Tanzania. In order to receive longer term and more flexibly offered international aid, countries needed to subscribe to policies which promoted the market economy.

In 1990 Tanzania constituted a task force to review the existing education system and come up with a blue print to guide Tanzania's education in the future. A final report, 'Tanzania Education System for the 21st. Century' was produced in 1993. Of it Cornelia Muganda (1996) says,

(it) is highly inaccessible by the general public because, not only is it in English language, but also no public debate has ever been organised to discuss the final report. This signifies a loss of democratic participation by the majority of Tanzanians who speak mainly Kiswahili and who have to date not been invited to discuss the document likely to affect their lives and those of future generations.

This report has, however, been adopted by government which is implementing its recommended reforms.

The emphasis by SAPs on dept servicing has had a disastrous effect on education. Government can afford to spend less and less and the situation of schools has deteriorated. The morale and wellbeing of teachers has continued to drop, numbers of children able to afford to attend school have decreased, learning institutions remain closed for long periods of time waiting for operational funds and standards of achievement have fallen. Where once there was a commitment to access to education for all, and ability, hard work and 'correct' attitudes were the measures which enabled a person to receive higher education, now family finances are the deciding factor.

A system of extra tuition has evolved, especially in urban areas, whereby teachers, who are poorly paid and need the extra money, give out of class tuition to those students who can afford it. These students are, then, advantaged over poor students and the egalitarian philosophies of the once socialist state are seriously undermined.

In the light of the rapidly degenerating situation the document 'Education and Training Policy' was produced in 1995 and was presented as a blue print to guide the provision of education in Tanzania.

The three documents mentioned contribute to the pressure exerted by the trans-national institutions (i.e. World Bank, IMF) to ensure that Tanzania adheres to neo-liberal economic principles. The statements in these documents are couched to blame the public education system and prescribe privatisation of education services. Sometimes selective reporting techniques are employed to ensure that only the aspects compatible with the neo-liberal ideology are considered (Muganda 1996). The recent emphasis on the quality of the educational process, rather than equality in and through education, has limited the expansion of education in a climate of restricted funding, cost sharing and decentralised responsibility for basic education to the local levels. Thus external capitalist forces influence the interpretation of educational conditions, direct processes of provision and define educational outcomes instead of acknowledging Tanzania's initiatives as a strength, not a weakness, and supporting them.

My observation is that the 'inevitable' steps towards privatisation and cost sharing recommended by these documents have led to extraordinarily poorly resourced schools, dependent on their communities for any improvement, extremely low morale among teachers who leave the profession, if possible, in order to improve their standard of living, lowering levels of achievement, decreasing access by girls in particular, and the development of a system of education for the financially elite. In short, a return to a situation not dissimilar to that of pre-independent Tanzania which will mitigate the nation's efforts towards development and real independence.

## CHAPTER 3

### THE STATUS OF WOMEN IN TANZANIA

“The full and complete development of a country, the welfare of the world and the cause of peace require the maximum participation of women on equal terms with men in all fields.”

(The United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women)

The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women was adopted by the U N General Assembly in December 1979 and was the culmination of almost thirty years of work by the U N Commission on The Status of Women, which was instrumental in bringing to light all areas in which women are denied equality with men. It is rooted in the goals of the U N to “reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person, in the equal rights of men and women.”

(Universal Declaration of Human Rights, United Nations)

In its preamble the convention explicitly acknowledges that “extensive discrimination against women continues to exist” and notes, and expresses concern over, specific forms of discrimination. It emphasises that such discrimination “violates the principles of equality of rights and respect for human dignity.” It requires the nations which have ratified it to take “all appropriate measures, including legislation, to ensure the full development and advancement of women, for the purpose of guaranteeing them the exercise and enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms on a basis of equality with men” (Article 3).

The Convention covers three dimensions of the situation of women – civil rights and the legal status of women, the impact of cultural factors on gender relations and the dimension of human reproduction. The declaration of the Decade for Women and the World Conferences On Women, the most recent of which was held in Beijing, China, in 1995, arose from the concerns of the Convention.

Given such a framework for change, and the fact that over 100 countries have ratified the convention, it is surprising that women remain severely discriminated against and deprived of the right to influence decisions determining the circumstances of their own lives and the future of society (Nzomo 1994).

It is now generally accepted that women constitute a key national resource. Their ideas, creative solutions and concern for the well-being of society can help to change and improve the quality of life of a society. To do that, however, their participation in public decision making roles is essential. Despite their daily use and management of natural resources, largely for the benefit of others, women continue to be excluded from major decision making processes which affect these resources. Why is this the case, particularly in Africa?

There are a multitude of reasons for the current low status of women in Africa. Among these, historical experiences of assault, mastery and trade in slaves and other forms of wealth, leading to a period of economic and political integration of Africa into capitalism, known as colonialism, had a disintegrating effect on the existing social structures (Ogundupe-Leslie 1994). This disruption of African society as a whole, had a profound effect on women, due to the imposition of a social structure based on class and sex (Mullings 1976: 247). The introduction of cash crops, as opposed to food crops, upset the relations of production and, undoubtedly, women's traditional roles (Boserup 1970: 53-56).

Women became marginalized in the production process as the cash crop gained in importance and new economic arrangements between men and women emerged giving rise to new attitudes of male social and economic superiority. Colonial administrations abandoned or distorted traditional political structures sweeping away any female participation in the handling of local power and administration (Boserup 1970: 53). Modern societies have inherited these male dominated structures and with them the hardened attitudes of male superiority and female exclusion from public affairs which the colonial systems introduced. Traditional ideologies of patriarchy were reinforced, leading to a situation whereby women are 'naturally' excluded from public life and viewed as unable to hold positions of responsibility (Ogundupe-Leslie 1994). "In their struggle for equality, African women have had to contend with a kind of coalition between Western and African men about what their roles should be" (Wipper 1972, in Mullings 1976: 247).

The effects of colonialism are far reaching. The 'psychology of the oppressed' and its characteristic dependency complex, as described by Franz Fanon, (1967) continues to impact upon the psyche of African men and women even after nations have gained their independence. The feelings of inferiority affect the economic and political behaviour of people denuding them of creativity, self reliance and productivity. In neo-colonial societies the ruling elites feel connected to, and dependent upon, industrialised countries in material, intellectual and emotional terms and spread their values within the society. Molara Ogundipe-Leslie sees women in neo-colonial societies as "dependent on the dependent .....like her male counterpart, she imitates everything European and despises her traditional culture and race while she fails to understand her own true needs" (1994: 109).

Colonization has also affected the legal structures of African societies introducing into them 19th. century European ideas of patriarchy. Women have lost special inherited rights and become more subordinated. The introduction and adoption of male dominated religions such as Islam and Christianity, which pre-dated colonization, also disrupted traditional society politically and legally and added to the subjugation of women. Consequently women now have legal battles to fight for their rights, in particular within family law in the areas of marriage, divorce, the sharing of property within marriage, inheritance, the control of their own bodies and possession of their children. Of colonialism, Ogundipe-Leslie says that, together with its attendant Westernisation and capitalism, it has "introduced capitalist values of greed, acquisitiveness, autonomy and individualism which have affected human relationships..... ..encouraging the subordination of women, financial disabilities and low female self esteem" (1994: 110). The increase in 'classed society' to which colonization was an impetus, is seen by Sacks (1979), as being detrimental to women who, she suggests, are transformed from a position of equality with men to one of subordination and dependency.

However, in most traditional African societies, equality was not the norm. Gender hierarchy was known and taken for granted. This ideology, that men are naturally superior to women, affects the organisation of modern societies and prolongs the attitudes of negative discrimination against women. The traditional gendered division of labour was accompanied by contempt for 'women's work' and has led to modern men trivialising the work of their female counterparts. In modern society women are often

channelled into the most menial, back-breaking and tedious jobs through discriminatory employment practices, and then under paid (Zack-Williams 1982, in Ogundipe-Leslie 1994).

From the traditional past also come notions of the physical control of a woman's body and its products through purdah, genital mutilation, the lack of personal control of reproduction or over children who are seen to belong to the man of the family (Ogundipe-Leslie, 1994). These controls are reinforced for many women by the dictates of Islam.

The low status of women is, then, imposed largely by the gender relationships which exist within a centuries old patriarchy which men are unwilling to abandon due to its advantages to them. The happy day when men will willingly share their power and privilege will never come according to Ogundipe-Leslie. It is necessary, therefore, for women to fight their own battle for their fundamental and democratic rights. However, they are hampered by their own negative self image and by centuries of internalisation of the ideologies of patriarchy and gender hierarchy. Their own reactions to problems are often self-defeating and grounded in fear, subjugation and dependency. Their lack of confidence in their ability to execute competently public leadership roles stems from their socialisation for subordination (Ogundipe-Leslie 1994).

Mullings contends that exceptions to the described situation exist in the case of nations which have adopted a socialist form of government and she quotes the view of Samora Machel (1975).

The emancipation of women is not an act of charity, it does not result from a humanitarian position or act of compassion. The liberation of woman is a fundamental necessity of the Revolution.....The Revolution has as its essential objective the destruction of the system of exploitation and the construction of a new liberated society where the potential of every human being is reconciled with work and nature. The equality of women is set within this context (Mullings 1976: 257).

However, the socialist idealism witnessed in Mozambique, Tanzania and Guinea Bissau, for example, has been superseded to a large extent, by ensuing events and economic conditions.

The reality is, that women in Africa remain a vulnerable, marginalized group that is yet to enjoy equality in status and equal access to services and resources with males. Women are concentrated in the rural areas where facilities and services are scarce and

they are more likely than men to suffer from poverty, illiteracy and landlessness and to be the victims of violence. They are affected most by the negative impacts of economic adjustment programmes bearing the brunt of decreased spending on social services. They constitute more than half the population yet they are absent from decision – making positions in governments, in parastatal organisations and in private companies. Women remain concentrated in the so-called ‘female professions’ and seldom go beyond middle management positions (Koda and Mukangara 1997; Getecha and Chipika 1995; Onimode 1991; Evans 1991).

The status of women in Tanzania has been documented by a number of researchers and this research has been assembled by TGNP (The Tanzania Gender Networking Programme) and SARDC (The Southern African Research and Documentation Centre). Both organisations acknowledge that there are gaps in their information and, therefore, areas for further research.

Prior to Independence women in Tanzania remained in the rural areas almost exclusively and their lives were prescribed by a mixture of traditional social structures and the patriarchal and paternalistic colonial administration. Few women received a Western education or ventured into the realm of ‘public life’. Their development within society since Independence in 1961 has been influenced by the attitude of the first president who, speaking of development policies for developing countries, said, “A person cannot walk very far or very fast with only one leg; how can we expect half the people to develop a nation” (Nyerere 1985), and by the socialist philosophy of the ruling party, TANU, in the early years of self-government. The party, in fact, sponsored a mass organization for women as a forum for the expression of their concerns and, compared to many other African countries, the political climate for promoting women in development has been favourable (Tibaijuka 1988). These factors, however, have not been enough to overcome completely the historical and social influences which have led to the subordination of women within the society.

The policies of socialism and self-reliance adopted in the late 1960s were the basis of most of the subsequent sectoral policies adopted between then and 1985 when policies of ‘Stabilisation’ and ‘Structural Adjustment’ were introduced. Koda and Mukangara (1997: 20), list the achievements of the Socialist, Nyerere led, government thus:-

- guaranteed access to land for women and youth in their own right as adult members of the village community,

- free education to both children and the adult population with remarkable success in reduction of illiteracy rate among girls and women,
- compulsory primary school education with noted gender balancing,
- positive discrimination for female access to university education, resulting in increased enrolment,
- easy access to other social services including health and water,
- service oriented self-help programmes were also initiated through participatory grassroots approaches where government was working in partnership with the people,
- benefits to women in terms of communal labour sharing and energy saving devices and child care facilities for those living in Ujamaa Villages,
- political consciousness among villagers was also elevated during the Ujamaa era where human rights, especially women's rights, were strongly advocated at policy levels.

Despite these achievements the economic crisis of the last decade, arising from a variety of causes, led to changes in policy, the need to borrow money from outside agencies and the introduction of 'Stabilization Policy Packages' and 'Structural Adjustment Programmes'. Both policy interventions emphasise the need to decrease the role of the state and to increase the role of the market in allocating resources. The purpose of these programmes was to lower inflation, to raise productivity and to increase government efficiency through reforms effected in the civil service. However SAPs also gave rise to economic imbalances and a lowering of the standard of social services, and locked Tanzania into a situation of crippling debt in which debt servicing accounts for 14.2% of export earnings (Bank of Tanzania. Monthly Economic Review: March 2000). Tanzania remains one of the world's poorest countries in terms of GDP.

Describing the effect of SAPs on women generally, Elson (1987 in Young 1993: 37) says, "Structural adjustment affects women in a number of ways: Through the impact of changes in income and prices, in the level and composition of public expenditure, or through changes in working conditions." The Tanzanian experience bears this out; "One major critique of SAPs is the glaring marginalization of, and impact on, women's needs" (Koda and Mukangara 1997: 21). The SAP focus on reduction of inflation, raising productivity efficiency, reduction of public expenditure, removal of subsidies, civil service reforms, cost sharing in the service sector and removal of price controls, affects more women than men and particularly poor women.

Because they are less skilled and less well educated than men, few women are in decision making positions. Those women in paid employment tend to predominate in the 'non-productive' service sector which has been heavily affected by government budget cuts. Even if they do not lose their jobs, conditions of work for teachers and nurses, for example, have become almost untenable. The loss of jobs for men also places a heavy burden on women who have to deal with the cut in family income, the presence of a frustrated husband and the numerous social ills which may result.

Price liberalization and removal of subsidies on basic commodities have also reduced the purchasing power of families. Women and children are most affected since women have less access to the household income but have to stretch it further.

The case of rural women is important since over 80% of women live in the rural areas. Of these, almost all are engaged in farming. The increasing emphasis on cash crops has lessened rural women's access to land and reduced their income. Because they have less access to agricultural expertise, through training and extension services, equipment and credit, it is difficult for them to compete with men or take part in this commercial activity and many seek casual employment or engage in informal sector income generation instead (Tibaijuka 1988: 263; Wagao 1993: 45).

The reduction of state expenditure on social services also affects women directly and in ways different to the effects on men. Given their involvement in child care and domestic work (the reproduction and maintenance of human resources), women are more dependent than men on public sector services such as provision of education and health, water and fuel and public transport. The loss of government funding leads to user charges and the closing of facilities. There is an unspoken assumption that much of the extra work created will be taken up by women. The adaptive strategies at household level to these changes, such as seeking out different and cheaper foods, nursing sick children and old people, instead of taking them to a health care centre and spending more time in diverse income generating activities, include time costs which it is implicitly assumed women will bear (Young, 1993: 38).

SAPs have not been without any advantage to women in Tanzania, according to Koda and Mukangara, as they have forced more women into public life and made them increasingly aware and critical of government and how it functions at all levels. The proliferation of women's income generating groups has also provided a forum for

women to support each other and discuss and plan how to access resources and decision making power at both community and household levels. The increase in media of all kinds has also provided an outlet for gendered information. There has been, however, a widening of the gap between rural and urban women so that the status of women in the urban areas, especially Dar es Salaam, diverges greatly from that of women in the rural areas.

Structural adjustment puts enormous pressure on most sections of the population but particularly on the poor with women suffering disproportionately (Young 1993: 39). The long term effects of reduced spending on social services, such as lowering standards in health and education, are also cause for serious concern and, in Tanzania, help to widen the gaps between rich and poor, rural and urban, and educated and non educated women.

Despite the hopes raised by the 1995 Beijing Women's Conference and the commitment to the 'Plan of Action' by the Tanzanian Government, which declared its support in a number of public ceremonies, the current social and economic status of women in Tanzania remains low.

In a predominantly agrarian economy the importance of land cannot be over emphasised, yet women's access to land is limited and is determined greatly by their relationship to men as daughters, wives and sisters; especially as wives since each woman is socially expected to get married.

The land tenure system in Tanzania discriminates against women as it is governed by patriarchal customary laws. Access to land is through inheritance, allocation, purchase and right of occupancy. It is estimated that in 1991 about 46% of all households in Tanzania had acquired land through the inheritance system where only sons and male clan members inherit clan land (Koda and Mukangara 1997: 22/3).

Karen Sacks' discussion of modes of production and the relative relationships of women to the means of production suggests that within a 'Kin Corporate' mode of production, as practised in most areas of Tanzania, gendered division of labour is clear and the relationship of wives with the means of production, in this case land, is diminished and their productivity controlled by their husband's 'corporation' (Sacks 1979:118). In general, women do not own the land on which they work, and even when they do, their farms are smaller than those of men.

Although the right to land was customarily considered a human right by people of Bantu origin, this has been eroded by the switch from subsistence farming to the growing of cash crops. In the interest of a cash income for the family, women may lose access to land, which they would normally use to produce food for their families, and have little or no control over the cash earned from the crop. Household food supplies then fall and food security is threatened. As well, most women are not familiar with the bureaucratic legal procedures accompanying the purchase of land and they are discouraged also by corruption and social attitudes to women owning land. Due to their greater access to education and information the 'new' rich also enjoy greater access to land which might otherwise be used for subsistence farming. The beginning of a 'ruling class', to use Sacks' (Sacks 1979) terminology, is evident with its inherent loss of control of the means of production by the subsistence farmers. Their lack of access to land serves to increase women's dependency on men and to affect both food security and socio-economic development. Women, who lack credit facilities and do not have a long term investment in the land, are not motivated to invest in land protection and development.

The Law Reform Commission has made recommendations to reform laws regarding inheritance and land ownership which have the potential to radically enhance the status of women but as yet the government has not taken any steps towards implementing the reforms.

The keeping of livestock is a means of subsistence and of production in Tanzania, with an estimated 90% of households owning livestock of some kind and their products accounting for 10% of GDP. The ownership of cattle is largely a male domain with big herds owned by members of some pastoral tribes and large scale production on male dominated government and private farms. Even at the domestic level, men own more cattle than women since they can acquire it through dowry, purchase, inheritance and exchange with other goods. Women are grossly disadvantaged in this area since they generally do not control enough cash income to purchase a major item such as a cow nor do they inherit family property (Koda and Mukangara 1997: 24).

During the Socialist era emphasis was placed on the provision of clean water, close to every household. This emphasis no longer exists and access to water has become increasingly difficult with periods of drought causing water sources to dry up. There has been no significant input of technology and most women and girls continue to carry

water containers on their heads or backs. This activity consumes a great deal of time and energy.

Due to the gendered division of labour, much time and energy is spent also by rural women in gathering fuel wood which accounts for 95% of domestic energy (Koda and Mukangara 1997: 23). Throughout Africa, the huge demand on the products of the forests and woodlands, which is not limited to domestic use, has led to wide scale deforestation and increasing demands on rural women's time as they need to walk further and further to fetch fuel (Moyo 1995). In Tanzania, women are the main fuel wood gatherers and spend an average of three hours fetching and transporting it (Ghamunga 1992: 53). Women's access to, and control over, forest products is limited to the harvesting of fire wood and herbs while the benefits from milled timber and charcoal are controlled by men (Williams 1999:10). In many cases the planting and nurturing of private woodlots is the task of women but ownership and the right to harvest the trees remains with men.

Women are excluded, to a large extent, from industry and technological advancement. Industries which existed in colonial times were nationalised after independence and, with the trade liberalization of the 1980s, were sold to the private sector with ownership passing into the hands of urban-based males often in partnership with foreign investors. Trade liberalization has also been responsible for tough competition for local industries leading to their demise in many cases. There has been no focus on technological advancement to meet the needs of women most of whom still use hand hoes and three-stoned cooking fires and their heads and backs for transportation.

Time study statistics, when considering all work, paid and unpaid, indicate that women spend more time working than men do. The Labour Force Survey 1991/2 (in Koda and Mukangara 1997: 26), shows that the majority of women are engaged in subsistence agriculture and related activities where they outnumber men. Other employment opportunities depend, to a great extent, on education, and the better paid employees are those with appropriate knowledge and skills. Here again, women are disadvantaged because of their low educational status in comparison with men which, in itself, is a reflection of the gender imbalance in education and training. Women are poorly represented in the professions and in administrative positions and most of the 20% who do have paid jobs are to be found in 'female' employment such as nursing, teaching or

secretarial work or they are employed in unskilled or semi-skilled menial jobs with little opportunity for training, promotion, increased pay or benefits (Masumba 1993: 58).

Despite the fact that the Tanzanian constitution spells out clearly the right of all persons, without any discrimination, to work, and to equal pay for equal work, the reality is that patriarchal attitudes and some employment laws violate women's right to work. Fears of women becoming pregnant, lack of support, lack of education and training and society's expectations, all mitigate women's opportunity to participate fully in a wide range of paid employment and those who do are unlikely to reach the upper levels of management or administration or to receive the concomitant salaries (Masumba 1993: 61).

Thirty per cent of Tanzania's GDP is contributed by the informal sector which absorbs many workers (56% of the urban population), who lack the skills needed for employment in the formal sector. In both rural, (where women are largely involved in agriculture), and urban areas, this sector is still dominated by men and the retrenchments resulting from SAPs have increased their participation proportionately. Women tend to be involved in enterprises which are an extension of their reproductive roles such as the processing and sale of food, brewing beer and the making and selling of handcraft articles. Mothers, daughters and other female relatives may share the responsibilities and roles of such operations (Koda and Omari 1991). However, most women lack business and management skills and it is even more difficult for them than for men to access credit and gain capital to set up or boost these enterprises. Efforts to provide support by Government and NGOs remain limited and scattered and reach few women. In general, informal sector 'employment' for women leads to a lot of work and long hours for little financial gain but this, and paid employment in the agricultural labour force, on plantations and large scale farms, does give women control over some income and bargaining power in a society where men control the decision making process and allocate the resources in most households.

The gendered division of labour results in women over working to the point of exhaustion and the reduction in household income due to the prevailing economic hardships has increased the demands at great risk to their health. The fact that many women are forced to take their daughters out of school to help them will be discussed in the next chapter. Koda and Mukangara (1997: 28), describe the situation of women in the work force thus:

Limited employment opportunities, and decision making power, little exposure to in-service training and study tours, lack of upward mobility and benefits, have put women in a low income status. It is no wonder therefore, that women are generally the poorest of the poor in both rural and urban areas.

The gender imbalanced workload also contributes significantly to food insecurity. Women are usually responsible for food crop production, yet they are often allocated infertile, marginal land, they have few technological aids, (most still cultivating with a hand held hoe), and they receive little or no assistance from extension services. Their access to credit, as already mentioned, is very limited so they are unable to buy fertilisers and soil supplements. All these factors contribute to a low level of production. Once the crop is harvested, because of their need for cash for school fees, uniforms etc, and in some cases a shortage of storage space, women are forced to sell surplus food instead of storing it for future use (Wagao 1993: 46/47).

SAPs have contributed to food insecurity as they have led to a greater need for a cash income as 'user pays' policies have been introduced into what were, formerly, free social services, and due to the lifting of price controls on food. Once again, women are expected to 'bridge the gap'. Despite the role they are expected to play, women have little input into the 'political' aspects of food security. Koda and Mukangara (1997: 30) sum up the situation.

Women's role in enhancing food security cannot be over- emphasised. They are custodians of both production and management since they are the cooks and distributors of food. However women own fewer and smaller farms, get less access to education, agricultural credit and extension services, no access to new technology, and are unable to hire labour. Their incomes and decision making powers are less than that of men.

There have been a number of initiatives by government and UN agencies and NGOs, to increase food security but there is a lack of coordination and focus to their activities.

The poor status of women's health has already been referred to. It is described as being "in a state of crisis" (Masumba et al 1993: 99), and this crisis is increasing as a result of the combined impact of SAPs and AIDS. Women's health status is lower than that of men because of their heavy work load, frequent pregnancies, malnutrition and anaemia and these factors are reinforced by cultural attitudes with regard to gender and food consumption (Tibaijuka 1988: 268).

The increase in women's work load brought about by the rising cost of living and the drop in real incomes has reduced their capacity to take care of their own health and that of others and also increases levels of stress and anxiety for many women. The cost of health services (which were once free) and transport to get to a clinic or hospital is a disincentive to seeking treatment and care in times of ill health. The lack of improved technology in the home, on the farm and in the provision of safe water contributes to women's work load with long treks to collect water consuming time and energy as already mentioned. The Social Sector Review, 1994, shows that in rural areas 46.3% of the population lack access to safe water and in urban areas, where town planning is poor but population increase has been rapid, only 31.5% have access to a safe water supply. The contaminated water sources, which many people are forced to use, lead to the prevalence of water borne diseases such as cholera, diarrhoea, dysentery, and typhoid. The many women who continue to cook on 'three stone fires' as well as having to collect fuel are subjected to the smoky conditions which lead to respiratory and other ailments. Research carried out into the effects of the cooking conditions of women in rural India, which are very similar to those in Tanzanian rural villages, showed "shocking" results. The high exposure to wood smoke led to increased high levels of heart disease, lung abnormalities, chronic bronchitis and other respiratory problems and impaired foetal development (Agarwal 1987).

The maternal mortality rate is high; over 200 per 100,000 births, with an observable increase since the introduction of SAPs and the reduced spending on the health sector (Tungaraza 1997: 16). These figures are contributed to greatly by the high number of teenage pregnancies and there are considerable variances from region to region and between rural and urban women. The main immediate causes of maternal deaths are haemorrhage, sepsis, obstructed labour, anaemia and malaria, however the underlying cause is the combination of women's over work, poverty and malnutrition which are the result of the economic crisis and the low priority given to social services by SAPs (Masumba et al 1993).

Cultural mores lie behind the differential attitudes towards women and men and towards reproductive and productive activities in society. Women researchers note the low value placed on reproductive work compared to productive work and the fact that no clear health policy was declared concerning women in their own right until the 1991 policy document on children and safe motherhood (Masumba et al 1993:101). The complete

lack of drive to improve women's lives by the introduction of improved 'female centred' technology stems from this attitude and has already been discussed. Discriminatory attitudes are exemplified too in women's lack of control over their own bodies and sexuality. One third of women bear children too early and this is encouraged by laws which allow them to marry early. This, and the high fertility rate, (6.5), result, to a large extent, from cultural expectations. Women's poor nutritional status is contributed to also by the cultural imperative that men be fed first and given the most nutritious food. The poor health of pregnant and lactating women is, of course, transferred to their infants increasing their risk of poor and stunted development or death.

Access to health care improved greatly after independence for most Tanzanian citizens. The government emphasised primary health care and were supported in their development aims by, mainly religious, NGOs. Government health services were free and, by 1978, 72% of the rural population lived within five kilometres of a health facility. The introduction of 'user pays' policies and the decreased spending on health with the advent of SAPs has led to a deterioration in health provision. Physical infrastructure, transport and equipment have fallen into a state of disrepair and staff morale is low due to a lack of incentives and training (Masumba et al 1993:102). Citizens complain of long waiting periods, poor treatment and lack of drugs. Tungaraza (1997: 19) concludes a paper on the effects of structural adjustment in Tanzania by commenting that, SAPs have "devastated social conditions" and the declining spending on health has resulted in increased infant mortality, malnutrition and disease.

The impact of HIV/AIDS on the population of Tanzania has been enormous, with an estimated 2.4 million people infected by 2000 and 750,000 to a million children orphaned. Not only are women extremely vulnerable in this area due to their lack of control over their own sexuality, the promiscuity of their partners and the system of polygamous marriage, but they are also burdened with nursing the sick and caring for the orphans. Their already low health status and their ignorance of the disease increase the risk of infection and their role as care givers increases their exposure. Young women and girls are greatly at risk because of their insecure social position and women whose economic powerlessness forces them to engage in some degree of prostitution are particularly vulnerable. The demands made on the already stretched health services are enormous and lead to a reduction in money and other resources for 'normal' health

services. Efforts are being made by government and NGOs to halt the spread of the disease however a high level of ignorance persists.

The effects of women's education on the health status of their families will be addressed in the next chapter. However one area where it is particularly noticeable is that of reproductive health where it effectively lowers the birth rate and the mortality rate for both mothers and infants. Although knowledge of family planning is high, due to Government and NGO campaigns, use of that knowledge remains limited and fertility rates remain high (Govt. of Tanzania MCH Report 1994). Women's poor health leads to premature ageing and early retirement from production. This, in turn, increases their vulnerability as their care and upkeep is dependent upon family members.

There is concern over the status of elderly women in both rural and urban settings. Traditionally, old people have been treated with respect and their care has been considered a social obligation. However traditional attitudes have been undermined by the introduction of the Western, market driven, culture with its emphasis on the nuclear family, a cash economy, commercialisation, privatisation and the formalisation of social services. In the urban areas the incomes and living conditions of most families are not conducive to the extended family system. In the rural areas, particularly in the West of Tanzania, old men remain respected but many old women are treated as scapegoats for the current economic hardship and consequent deaths. Accused of witchcraft, harassed and molested, many old women have been killed and little is being done to address the social ills which lead to this (Koda and Mukangara 1997: 56). Added to this the numerous deaths from AIDS has meant that many old women are expected to care for orphaned grandchildren without community or financial support.

Although Female Genital Mutilation is illegal and punishable as a crime, implementation of the law has been difficult as it has simply led to FGM being carried out in secret and on increasingly younger girls. In the six regions of Tanzania mainland where it is performed it is seen as an initiation into womanhood. It is associated with ancestral and spiritual powers and brings with it the respect of the adult community. Because it is usually carried out at home in unhygienic conditions, it exposes young women and girls to serious health risks. It also makes 'normal' sexual relations difficult and increases the risks and difficulties of child birth. A number of NGOs and religious organisations have joined the government in campaigning against FGM resulting in a lessening of the severity of the mutilation in some cases and in some young women

refusing to be mutilated at all. However, a much more concentrated, multi-dimensional, community based approach is needed in order to make significant changes (Masumba et al 1993:101).

The problem of domestic violence is widespread in Tanzania, although there still exists a code of silence regarding this issue. The Marriage Act of 1971 prohibits assault on one's spouse, but this law is rarely enforced. The roots of discrimination and domestic violence are connected to the real, or perceived, status of women in society. The subordination of women and the institutionalisation of enforced economic dependence and powerlessness have all contributed to domestic violence (Kamau 1995: 40). Social attitudes and customs reinforce the view that wife beating, rape, sexual harassment and the impregnation of teenagers and young girls are 'domestic issues' not to be dealt with by police or outsiders and "the patriarchal nature of the police and court system renders them hostile to women and human rights activists who challenge wife-beating" (Koda and Mukangara 1997: 59). The Ministry of Community Development, Women's Affairs and Children and the Ministry of Home Affairs have been supported by organisations like TAMWA (Tanzania Media Women's Association) and the Women Lawyers' Association in efforts to sensitise the various branches of the justice system to gender issues but, at this stage, these efforts have been confined almost exclusively to the urban centres while in the rural areas victims, culprits and the justice system remain uninformed.

Both the economic recession and SAPs have caused stress and hardship at the household level which has led to an increase in women's vulnerability and an aggravation of domestic violence which is invariably directed at women and children. Another outcome of the economic situation is the necessity for migration to towns and mining and plantation centres in search of work. This has resulted in the abandonment of some women and their children who then are exposed to a variety of social ills.

The vulnerability of women in many of the areas and situations already discussed stems from their unequal treatment within, and their ignorance of, the legal system of Tanzania. This is a dual system consisting of statutory laws and customary and religious laws. As products of patriarchy, both systems lack gender sensitivity and many customary laws violate human rights and perpetuate the oppression of women. The Tanzanian constitution prohibits discrimination based upon race, creed, nationality, tribe, origin, political affiliation or lifestyle but there is no mention of gender. Although

discrimination based upon gender is discouraged, there is no legislation specifically prohibiting it. In fact, certain legislation and the general legal system discriminate against women in a number of ways such as through some labour laws, sections of the marriage act of 1971 and the law of succession and inheritance.

Customary laws are applied when there is an absence of written legislation pertaining to an issue of a civil nature. Theoretically, if statutory law exists, this should take precedence over customary law, however, in practice, the use of customary law is still widespread. Islamic laws pertaining to civil matters such as guardianship and divorce are used by followers of Islam.

The legal status of women within statutory law is undermined by poor implementation, lack of transparency and social pressures. The dominance of males within the system, their lack of training and corruption compound the problems for women who are discouraged from taking cases to court or pursuing them to a conclusion. The attitude of society towards women who are prepared to 'stand up for their rights' is also discouraging and the small number of women in the police force means that they cannot implement the changes that need to be made.

Although efforts are being made by some NGOs and groups such as The Association of Women Lawyers to educate women in legal matters these efforts are mainly urban based, as already mentioned, and a large percentage of Tanzanian women remain legally illiterate. Most women are not aware of their rights before the law and consequently fail to act upon them. The fact that many laws are written in English and in complicated legal language also hinders women from learning about and asserting their rights.

The under representation of women in decision making roles, at all levels and in all sectors of society and the work force, has been referred to already. Nowhere is this more true than in government. Tanzania was among the first African countries to grant universal suffrage, in 1959, however women's ability to vote has not been matched by their taking a full and active role in government. As can be seen in table 3.1, the highest rank held by women in the government is that of cabinet minister and that has been consistently less than 15%.

TABLE 3.1 Women's Representation in Decision Making

Indicator	Available Data
Participation in decision making. Representation and participation of women in formal govt. legislative administrative bodies at national, regional and local level within sectors of direct relevance to women.	1992 Legislation guarantees 15% parliamentary seats for women and 25% local government seats for women
	Members of Parliament: women
	1985 - 26 (10%)
	1990 - 27 (11%)
	1995 - 45 (16%)
	Ministers: women
	1985 - 3 (9%)
	1990 - 3 (12%)
	1995 3+ (Deputy Minister)
	Regional Commissioners 1991 - 2 (10%)
RDD - 0 (0%)	
DC - 8 (10%)	
DDD - 4 (5%)	
Community Development - 0 (0%)	
Municipal Director - 0 (0%)	
Town Director - 1 (10%)	

Source: Koda and Mukangara 1997, from Government of Tanzania Bureau of Statistics.

In the public sector women are rarely appointed to levels sufficiently senior to deal with policies, planning and finance and when they are they are placed predominantly in ministries dealing with domestic matters rather than ministries such as Justice where their influence might have far reaching effects. The situation is similar in the regions where women make up only 10% of Regional and District Commissioners, (see table 3.1), and are grossly under represented in the positions which direct the regional and district development activities. Table 3.2 shows how this situation is a reflection of women's representation at local government level.

TABLE 3.2 Composition of Village Committees in eight Regions, 1989

Region	Social Services		Finance & Production		Defence & Security		
	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	
Ruvuma	14	156	6	164	2	83	-
Mtwara	13	137	6	143	6	69	
Iringa	246	444	65	525	48	247	
Morogoro	27	273	23	277	9	141	
Shinyanga	33	207	12	228	9	111	
Kilimanjaro	14	86	9	101	4	61	
Hai district							
Kagera	30	250	13	367	10	180	
Total	327	1533	134	1805	88	892	
Percent	12%	88%	7%	93%	9%	91%	

Source: Koda and Mukangara 1997 from MCDWAC, Community Development Dept.

Despite the fact that it is mandatory for 25% of village and district councillors to be women, this is not enforced and women's participation in local government is very low. The socio-economic environment mitigates their involvement as they lack self confidence, knowledge and information, analytical skills and the time to attend meetings. Meanwhile, decisions about land allocation, placement of water facilities, access to woodlots and so on are made without the input of women. As long as women are not involved at the planning level of programmes, the plans are likely to marginalize women's priorities and the female perspective.

An affirmative action policy has been implemented in order to increase the number of women in parliament and, since the last election, in 1995, women have held 45 of the 275 seats. "...there is optimism about the ability these women MPs will have to change the direction of the development process" (Koda and Mukagara 1997: 35).

It is clear that customs and customary law can lead to, and support, inequality in gender relations and even the oppression of women. As marriage is the 'expected' state for most Tanzanians, it is within marriage that much of this oppression takes place. The law, which allows females to marry at 15, while for males the legal age for marriage is 18, is a starting point for this discrimination. Marriage at such an early age prevents young women from completing their education and exposes them to the health risks of early pregnancy and child birth.

Four types of marriage are common and legal in Tanzania; monogamous Christian marriages, polygamous Muslim marriages and civil and traditional marriages which are potentially polygamous. Now days it is usual for young people to choose their own partner and there are legal procedures to be followed for both marriage and divorce. Despite the cultural importance of marriage, there are a large number of female headed households in Tanzania. The figure of 24.5% produced in 1991/2 by the Demographic Household Survey is expected to have increased substantially by now.

Marriage is associated with the payment of 'bride-price' which is viewed by many as one of the main underlying factors contributing to the mistreatment of, and discrimination against, women. Many young women, especially in the rural areas, are pressured into marriage in order to increase the family income. Husbands and in-laws then consider the bride their 'property' to utilize as they wish. A woman, therefore, starts her married life as an unequal partner. With marriage, her economic dependence adds to her earlier socialization as a subordinate being (Kamau 1995: 40). Legislation has been passed which validates marriages where no bride-price has been paid and many educated and /or rich parents are forgoing the practice, however it still receives widespread social acceptance. As already mentioned, decision making, at household level, tends to remain with the male.

An analysis of the status of women anywhere in the world, and Tanzania is no exception, constantly indicates the importance of education in improving all aspects of women's lives. Because it is of such importance and my research is focused on aspects of education, I will deal with it in a separate chapter.

It is clear that in Tanzania women still suffer discrimination and hardship on the basis of their gender due to the constructs of a patriarchal society which emanates from a combination of traditional social mores and colonial influences. The potentially positive impact of socialism, adopted after independence, has been superseded by the effects of economic recession and Structural Adjustment. However, many women who received secondary and tertiary education during the socialist period are extremely concerned about the status of women and the low level of academic achievement of girls and are making strenuous efforts to effect an improvement. Extensive research (often funded by donor agencies), into various aspects of the lives of women and girls has been, and continues to be, carried out by academics. The formation of the NGO, TGNP, and the training, research and support activities it is carrying out show a commitment to change.

Organisations such as TAMWA and the Association of Women Lawyers are receiving recognition and becoming increasingly effective in raising gender awareness, improving the level of women's knowledge and instigating change. Women's Resource Centres have been established at the University of Dar es Salaam, the Ministry of Community Development, Women and Children, and at the TGNP headquarters. These interventions are, at this stage, to a large extent, limited to urban centres. However, inroads are being made into the entrenched modes of behaviour which maintain the low status of women.

## CHAPTER 4

### EDUCATION FOR WOMEN AND GIRLS IN TANZANIA

Education is constantly referred to as the 'key' to development (Boserup 1970: 119; Newland 1979, in Sohoni 1995: 97; Sweetman 1998: 4) and its effect in improving the quality of life has been touched upon in the previous chapter. There is also a growing awareness of the important role of women in development. Because they make a major economic contribution to their communities and assume primary responsibility for the health, socialisation and well-being of their families, their active and 'informed' support is crucial to the realisation of development objectives. There can be no transformation of society without their involvement, support and leadership. Education is seen as the means of preparation for their expanded role as change agents in society. Research has shown that education for women is associated with increased economic productivity, lower fertility, a more positive approach to technology and a positive attitude to the education of their own children (e.g. Adams and Kruppenbach 1987). Women's education was shown to be linked to reduced infant and maternal mortality over twenty years ago when research suggested that each extra year of maternal education was associated with a 9 per cent decrease in under-five mortality (Caldwell 1979, in Sweetman 1998: 4).

Governments in the developing world have recognised this link which is reinforced by a World Bank study of several countries showing that nations which invested heavily in formal primary and female education benefited through higher economic productivity, lower infant and maternal mortality, longer life expectancy, and lower fertility rates than those with lower levels of female education (King 1990, in Sohoni 1995: 97). In general, education leads to later marriage as educated women are more inclined to work in paid employment, to have a life outside the home and to resist an undesired marriage. This, in turn, has a strong influence on fertility rates. Sohoni, (1995: 34), gives the example of the state of Kerala, India which has the highest rate of female literacy, (60%), and the highest average marriage age of women in the country. It also has the lowest birth rate, the highest age expectancy and the lowest infant and maternal mortality rate in the country.

Research in Tanzania shows a strong relationship between parental, and particularly maternal, levels of education and girl's school attendance. This research linked socio-economic status and education and showed, "that girls from humble families are much less likely than their brothers to be sent to school... Thus, girls tend to come from more privileged backgrounds than boys at secondary school levels in Tanzania and it is evident that girls from an average family have very limited educational opportunities" (Malekela 1984: 6). This "lack of access to appropriate education and training opportunities perpetuates women's continuing marginalisation from social, economic and political power" (Sweetman 1998: 2).

Despite the evidence of its positive effects, equality of education continues to be denied to girls and women. In this chapter, I will address the reasons for this and the outcomes for women themselves and society.

According to Florence Dolphyne (1991), women's education has always lagged behind that of men in African societies and she suggests several basic reasons for this including the traditional role of women which has been to ensure the continuity of the patrilineage. This led to early marriage with husbands expected to provide for their wives. If women were involved in economic activities they were peripheral to their 'real' reproductive role, and boy's education was, therefore, given priority. Once girls married they became members of their husband's family and not available to contribute to their parents' welfare so investment in their education had little value for parents. In Zimbabwe rural women's opinions on issues affecting their lives were recorded, and they confirm this attitude. In the words of Mrs. Jongo;

Our father denied us secondary education because he felt it was useless since we were going to be married. He believed that when we got married, we would not go to work, but stay home looking after the children and our husband's family and doing household chores. He would actually say educating a girl child was a waste of money (Getecha and Chipika 1995: 30).

In Uganda "the decreasing proportion of girls attending school at successively higher levels indicates that a choice is being made to use available funds to educate boys rather than girls" (UNICEF 1989, in Sohoni 1995: 109). Fiona Leach, (1998: 13) notes that this 'lagging behind' of women's education increases as young people move up the educational ladder and can be observed also in parts of Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean.

The gaining of independence in Tanzania, in 1961, led to a rejection of traditional attitudes to school enrolment and an unprecedented focus on education which was seen as a basic right. The government adopted the goal of UPE (Universal Primary Education) by November 1977, as already discussed in Chapter 2. Emphasis was placed on equalising opportunity for different ethnic groups, urban and rural children and girls and boys, and impressive results were achieved at the primary level where, by 1979, 96% of children in the 7-13 age group were enrolled in what was essentially man power training for independent Tanzania, due to the enthusiastic efforts of communities and government. Unfortunately, these efforts could not be matched by provision of buildings, teaching materials or teachers to cope with the success in enrolment and this eventually led to a degree of disillusionment, a decline in standards and enrolments and an increase in drop-outs ( Mbilinyi and Mbughuni 1991).

Although gender equity in enrolment was achieved at primary school level, as will be discussed later in this chapter, enrolment is only the first step towards an education. What girls gain, or fail to gain, by being in school, is even more important. Access to post primary education was extremely limited in the three decades post-independence. It was very selective, controlled by governments' perceived need for personnel, and neglected the resource needs of the private sector and the demand for higher education by parents and young people who valued it. Social pressures and their poorer examination results, in the final primary school exams, tended to keep girls from continuing with their education, since only those who performed very well were admitted to the government secondary schools. However, a quota system which ensured a degree of gender and ethnic balance was adopted, (Mboline 1997), and the introduction of private schools in the 1980s made secondary school more accessible, especially to girls, as these schools did not demand such high examination marks for entrance.

The gender imbalance at tertiary level, apart from Teachers' Training Colleges, has been, and continues to be, even more pronounced. Table 4.1 (overleaf) shows female enrolment as a percentage of total enrolment 1983-94.

TABLE 4.1 Women's Enrolment as a Percentage of Total Enrolment, 1983–1994

Educational Level	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994
Primary Std. I	50.0	50.4	49.5	49.3	48.5	49.4	50.0	49.2	48.2	48.6	48.9	49.2
Std. VII	45.5	50.4	48.5	50.0	50.4	51.0	49.5	50.3	50.7	49.3	49.3	49.4
Std. I-VII	48.9	47.5	49.9	50.0	49.8	49.7	49.6	49.5	49.4	49.1	49.2	49.4
Secondary Form I Total	36.9	38.3	38.6	41.2	42.2	44.2	44.2	43.6	45.2	45.6	44.9	45.8
Public	33.4	34.3	34.4	37.2	37.6	40.4	41.8	39.2	43.1	43.3	43.5	45.3
Private	40.9	42.5	42.8	44.6	45.5	47.3	46.1	46.7	46.7	47.2	46.0	46.2
Form IV-Total	34.8	35.3	36.7	37.9	39.3	38.8	40.2	41.1	42.5	42.8	43.2	43.4
Public	32.2	32.8	32.9	32.6	33.8	33.8	36.6	35.5	39.1	40.0	40.1	41.1
Private	38.0	38.0	40.5	42.4	43.5	42.0	42.7	44.4	45.3	45.2	46.0	45.3
Form V-Total	21.0	22.3	22.7	22.0	19.4	22.8	27.8	29.8	25.5	27.3	30.4	31.6
Public	21.7	22.1	22.7	21.5	19.7	24.6	28.9	18.3	27.5	29.2	32.2	31.8
Private	15.3	22.9	23.2	23.7	18.4	18.7	25.2	23.2	21.6	23.6	26.9	31.4
Form VI-Total	22.2	20.9	21.2	20.3	20.8	18.8	23.5	23.4	24.3	24.3	27.8	27.1
Public	22.8	20.9	22.4	20.2	21.6	19.2	25.1	23.9	26.0	26.0	29.7	28.7
Private	16.6	21.3	20.0	21.0	18.4	17.7	18.3	22.1	25.7	20.4	24.2	24.2
Form I-VI-Total	35.0	35.8	36.9	38.4	39.6	41.1	42.6	41.5	43.2	43.4	43.2	43.9
Public	31.9	32.2	32.4	33.3	34.4	36.3	35.8	36.4	40.2	40.7	43.2	42.3
Private	38.9	40.1	41.4	43.1	43.7	44.6	45.7	45.3	45.6	45.6	45.3	45.1
Teacher Education	37.9	38.5	41.1	39.8	40.9	41.6	40.8	42.7	44.8	49.6	51.1	50.8
Technical Educ.	10.8	10.7	11.2	10.1	7.5	5.2	7.4	6.8	5.6	6.2	7.0	6.0
University Educ.	19.6	17.4	16.0	15.5	15.2	14.4	17.1	22.4	19.1	18.6	17.5	21.8

Source: Tanzanian Ministry of Education Statistics (1997)

It can be seen that during this period female enrolment at Standard 1 remained constant at around 50%. The percentage of girls attending Secondary School improved over this period, particularly in government schools, however the percentage of female enrolments show a steady decline as the level of education rises. The ramifications of this tendency are made clear by Gail Kelly (1992: 279) when she discusses the loss of unskilled jobs as economies become more sophisticated and the increasing need for women, and men, to have secondary or higher education in order to enter the paid work force. Whilst female enrolment at Teachers' Training College improved over this period, from 38% to around 50%, enrolment in other tertiary institutions has remained very low. This is contrary to world wide trends documented by the UN. They note that "increasingly women are enrolling in colleges and universities. In developed regions as well as in some countries of southern Africa and western Asia, the numbers of women and men have become nearly equal", in the latter third of the twentieth century (UN 1991, in Sohoni 1995: 105). Enrolment at all levels and the quality of education

provided have been affected in recent years by the economic recession and the introduction of SAPs.

Although many of the problems facing girls are not obvious at primary level, where their attendance and achievement are on a par with boys, their later weaker academic performance implies that their problems begin at primary school. I suggest that by the time girls complete primary school the image they have of themselves serves to decrease their ability to overcome the other problems that they face. Several pieces of research carried out in Tanzania and elsewhere, (Hyde 1993; Mabala and Kamazima 1996; Peasgood et al 1996; Ballara 1991; Brock-Utne and Katunzi 1990), identify the disadvantages experienced by girls and women in the area of education which lead to their low rate of achievement, (as measured by exam. results), and retention, as they move up through the system. They fall into four broad categories.

#### Marriage, pregnancy and initiation:

As marriage is considered the 'norm', the fear of social disapproval and economic hardship involved in not marrying suggests marriage will be a central part of girls' perceptions of their future. This can not only be a serious disincentive for continuing with their schooling but it can also influence choice of subjects and performance in 'masculine' subjects. If studying becomes a difficult option, marriage may appear preferable. Initiation, as a preparation for marriage, may lead to the removal of a girl from school either short term or permanently. As already discussed, young women have little control over their own sexuality and pregnancy is an ever present risk. Fearing this, some parents will remove their daughters from school to marry them off before it occurs. The payment of bride-price exerts yet another pressure on girls to marry so that parents receive this income sooner rather than later. In fact, education may be seen as detrimental in relation to marriage contracts as educated women are considered to be less submissive and more resistant to patriarchal systems. For traditional marriage, education may lower a woman's value (Mbilinyi 1991).

#### Parental attitudes and girl's situation within the family unit:

Parental attitudes to education are crucial to girls' access since it is parents, not governments, who, in the long run, decide whether education is universal and equal for both genders. Mothers are particularly important as already mentioned as their own

level of education has a strong influence on whether their children, especially daughters, attend school (Malekela 1994), and on whether they can afford to send them, in particular, in cases of polygamy or male migration. As already noted, it is more difficult for parents to perceive the benefits to themselves of a girl's education so they need to approve it for its benefits to society and its intrinsic benefits to the girl herself. Also they have to accept, and be able to afford, the 'opportunity cost' of not having the girl at home to help with domestic chores, look after younger siblings and free the mother for more economically beneficial tasks. Even when enrolled in school, many girls carry huge domestic responsibilities and are often kept home to help, or work hard before and after school with little or no time for homework or study and the consequent lowering of their performance level at school (Sumra and Katunzi 1991). This burden of household work is observable throughout Sub-Saharan Africa and South East Asia (Sohoni 1995: 111). Sohoni also discusses a number of studies which highlight the discrepancy in time spent in household activities by girls as compared to boys, with girls often spending as much as four times as long as boys on such activities.

In some families the school is seen as a threatening place where a girl is exposed to undesirable influences and challenges to traditional beliefs and practices. In social groups which practice purdah, or where sex segregation is expected for religious reasons, access to schooling is limited. 'An Action Guide for Girl's Education' compiled by San Francisco Area Girl's Education Network (Groves et al 1995), outlines examples of sexual harassment and pressure to which girls and young women may be subjected in schools and universities and cites cases in the developing world. Such behaviour is identified in schools in Tanzania by Brock-Utne and Katunzi (1990).

In difficult economic circumstances decisions sometimes have to be made as to which children will be sent to school and it is generally the boys who are favoured. The older a girl gets the harder it is for her to stay in school and the shortage of 'places' in secondary schools and the greater expenses there and at university add to her difficulties.

#### The school environment:

Given the extremely poor current environment in government and many private schools, it is surprising that students achieve as much as they do. Inadequate classrooms, furniture and teaching materials, high student / teacher ratios and low teacher morale,

(caused by the poor pay and conditions) affect all students and girls particularly are affected also by the male oriented culture of schools and the low level of expectation for them. There persists a belief by teachers that girls are less able and dedicated than boys and this affects their attitude to girls to whom they are less positive and give less time and attention (Mbilinyi et al 1991). This, in turn, encourages a lack of self confidence and assertiveness within girls, reinforcing society's expectation of gender differences. This is also reinforced by learning materials which exaggerate and perpetuate the unrealistic idea that a woman's role is confined to that of wife and mother.

The positions of authority in the school environment are mostly held by men, leaving girls with few positive role models or advocates for their needs. The women teachers, who have themselves been through the gender insensitive system, are not necessarily aware of the gender issues involved.

Opportunities for sport and recreation seem to be divided on the basis of gender with equipment and sporting facilities for boys taking priority and girls being channelled into cultural activities such as dancing and singing where they learn to take on the role of 'entertainers'.

This deficiency in the school environment in relation to girls is not exclusive to Tanzania. Gordon, (1998: 54) writes of it, as observed in Zimbabwe. Sohoni, (1995: 112) lists factors which contribute to the 'problem' of girl's education which are reflected by the factors identified in Tanzania, and Leach, (1998: 14) writes that, "the 'hidden curriculum' of school practice reinforces messages about girl's inferior status on a daily basis and provides them with a negative learning experience."

Examination results show that all students achieve better marks if studying in boarding school, where they have greater opportunity to concentrate on their studies. The results of girls in boarding schools exceed those of boys and girls in day schools (Malekela, Ndabi and Cooksey 1990: 12). However, the places in boarding schools are very limited and are fewer for girls than for boys. Recommendations have been made to the government that more hostels be built for girls and a few schools have been able to increase their female enrolment by doing this but with the cuts in social services under Structural Adjustment such building programmes have all but ceased. Previously fees, living expenses, uniforms and transport were all paid for by government. In the current 'user pays' climate the expense of sending a son or daughter to boarding school, should they be selected, is a disincentive and likely to disadvantage girls in particular. In one of

they were able to cope with as some of the 'selected' students had not arrived and the school administration was offering the places to other students.

Numerous studies refer to the irrelevance of areas of the curriculum, as perceived by parents and students, especially for female students, and have identified this as a reason for some students 'dropping out' (Malekela, Ndabi and Cooksey 1990: 14; Mbilinyi 1996: 3; Mabala and Kamazima 1996: 48). At secondary school there is a strong tendency for girls to be steered into so-called 'female' subjects and away from science, mathematics and technology. Their predominance in Home Economics courses limits their opportunities to extend their education or obtain good jobs (Meena 1995: 41).

Female enrolment at university has been consistently low and follows the subject orientation established in secondary school as shown in Table 4.2. In such circumstances it is little wonder that women's role in the work force is limited in the face of economies increasingly based on the use of computer based technologies (Kelly 1992: 281) Apart from the successful efforts at Muhimbili School of Health Sciences, few efforts are made to assist young women to cope with the demands of university life and work and to overcome the educational disadvantages they have already encountered. Numbers of female teachers are low in all universities and female students report an 'anti-female' student culture at the University of Dar es Salaam (Mosha 1990).

TABLE 4.2 Enrolment Levels at the University of Dar es Salaam by Subject and Gender, 1989-1995

	1989/90		1991/92		1992/93		1993/94		1994/9	
	F %	M %	F %	M %	F %	M %	F %	M %	F %	M %
Proportion of female and males by field of study as against enrolment at the UDSM										
B.A. General	21	79	20	80	21	79	19	81	24	7
B.A. Education	26	74	25	75	28	72	28	72	34	6
B. Education	0	0	28	72	24	76	21	79	21	2
B. Education (PESC)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	8	9
B. Commerce	20	80	21	79	19	81	17	83	18	8
B.Sc. General	17	83	20	80	22	78	17	83	19	8
B.Sc. Geology	3	97	5	95	4	96	3	97	7	9
B.Sc. Education	19	81	22	78	21	79	23	77	28	7
LL.B	25	75	24	76	22	78	21	79	22	7
B.Sc. Engineering	5	95	5	95	5	95	3	97	3	9
B. Computer Science	0	0	15	85	14	86	10	90	3	9
B.Sc. Electronics	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0	10
B.Sc. Agriculture	0	100	0	100	0	100	0	0	0	
Total	17	83	18	82	17	83	14	86	17	8

Source: Koda and Mukangara (1997: 44)

Society's pressures and expectations:

As the representative of society, government has a great influence over the provision and quality of education. The Tanzanian Government's successes during the years 1960-1980 in extending girls' access to education have been undermined seriously by the current economic crisis as have several affirmative action policies. However, policies and strategies aimed at increasing female access to education will not be successful until there are fundamental changes in the way women are regarded within society. Since a major role of educational institutions is to socialise young people to take their place in their society they reflect the roles and values to be found in that society. Tanzania is a male dominated society where men are at the centre of power while women remain marginalized by the social structures. Speaking of African schools in general, Maigenet Shifferaw (1992) says:-

....schools carefully coach females to fit into the accepted values and norms of the dominant culture. Whenever women demand a fair share of the opportunities available to their male counterparts, they are pushed into the 'culture of silence'. If women demand their democratic rights they are accused of disturbing the social order and of being a threat to African tradition.

She claims that it is because of their socialisation at school, at home and in the community that women tend to be submissive and believe that boys are more clever and hard-working than girls and that girls cannot do so well as boys in certain subjects. Kelly (1992: 281) claims that, "Schooling alone can only provide women with knowledge skills and credentials but the extent to which these translate into equality between men and women in society depends on whether the structures that keep women subservient to men are themselves changed." Tanzanian researchers and writers seem to support this view noting that equity of education opportunity and quality will be insecure until society places equal value on the welfare of men and women and responds equally to their different needs (Brock-Utne and Mwajabu 1990; Brock-Utne and Katunzi 1990; Kassimoto 1998). "Although a law may help enforce attendance, the root socio-economic factors affecting girls' access, attrition and performance remain untouched" (Mbilinyi 1991 in Peasgood; Bendera; Abrahams and Kisanga 1996: 53). Some Tanzanian researchers feel that efforts made by the Ministry of Education and Culture to address the situation are inadequate.

Measures which have been taken to redress gender imbalance are mainly cosmetic and none have attacked the power relationship between the two

genders and particularly the subordinate position of women in the society (Meena 1995, in Peasgood; Bendera; Abrahams and Kisanga 1996: 183).

In her research into the under achievement of Tanzanian girls in examinations, Tuli Kassimoto (1998) posits the low self esteem of young women and girls as a major contributing factor and outlines the kind of socialisation which contributes to the formation of this.

Girls normally carry negative images of themselves deep inside them. These negative images are built up as they grow up when they are made to feel worthless, weaker or smaller than boys; when they are made to feel that they are not noticed or valued in the same way as boys are and their work is made out to be worth little. They are brought up to accept the social system in which they live. Society's image of girls affects their performance right from the first day. Society helps them to form their own perceptions of their skills and limitations which then influence the perceived choices for them (Kassimoto: 1998 Introduction).

Lack of self-confidence, timidity and submissiveness to male authority are seen also as limiting factors for women's participation in education by Marcela Ballara (1991: 11), and Gordon (in Brickhill, Hoppers and Pehrsson 1996: 7). Sohoni, (1995: 109) writes that in India, "A disturbing facet of discriminatory treatment of girls in education is that they tend to internalize parental perceptions and rationalize higher spending on their brothers by their parents." In Tanzania, the girl child is socialised into a belief that she has to accept the position of a second and inferior sex. "She grows up informed that her opportunities and chances in life are not the same as those of her brother" (Peasgood, Bendera, Abrahams and Kisanga 1996: 47). This is particularly significant in relation to schooling.

Girl's negative self-image was evident when secondary school girls were interviewed by Sumra and Katunzi. The female students stated that boys were better at studying than girls, had more thinking capacity, spent more time reading and used their time well while girls spent time thinking of their boy friends. "Girls tended to despair more quickly than boys when they failed in class" (Sumra and Katunzi 1991: 56).

Other researchers agree that the:-

Prevailing customs and social attitudes enforce the inferior social position and status of women. Women are seen to have no ability to engage in independent thinking or have original ideas. For these reasons women are marginalized in decision making in matters of social

importance. The patriarchal systems, including school socialisation and religion, have so negatively influenced women, that the majority feel inferior and consider women who are more assertive to be 'social deviants' (Koda and Mukangara 1997: 38).

Researchers in Tanzania have found that future expectations of girls differed from those of boys and probably affected their performance. While boys expected a good job, girls focused more on being good wives and doing supportive work in offices and this probably affected their academic performances. Faced with a uninviting school environment, and persistent academic failure, how comforting it may be to say, "after all, I am only a girl, it doesn't matter if I don't make it" (Mbilinyi et al 1991: 39).

Malekela (1995) expresses similar ideas when discussing the poor academic performance of girls. He writes of society's stereotyped attitudes to women and its low expectations for women, low self-concept, biased curriculum, learning materials and teaching methods and low teacher expectation.

Girls and young women are faced with a dichotomy of expectations. In Tanzania schooling is supposed to make students competitive, hard working, knowledgeable about subject matter, self-confident, active in the classroom and the school, and capable of independent work and analytical thought, regardless of sex. There is a claim that all have equal opportunity to achieve. However, what the school advocates is contrary to the approved behaviour traits society is encouraging in girls.

The evidence suggests that, contrary to expectation, access to education has not had a transformative effect for women since not only does it fail to counteract the subordinating effects of society's structures, but it also contributes to them. Girls and young women internalise patriarchal principles, not only in the family but also in the wider society, particularly the school as it is there that students develop their academic self-concept and a sense of themselves in relation to educational institutions (Gordon 1998: 57).

The importance of self-confidence, self-esteem, and high goals to help young women to break out of society's mould is clear. The conscious self-concept, or how they see themselves, can play an important role in influencing behaviour. Maslow (1954, in Berger 1988) postulates an inborn motive to develop one's potentialities, (self actualisation), so it is clear also that young women in the 'self awareness' stage of ego development should have a clear awareness of their own potentialities.

By adolescence people are forming fairly detailed (although not necessarily accurate) concepts about who and what they are and about who and what they might become. Development psychologists suggest that a huge range of factors contribute to the development of self-concept including feed back from adults and peers. Self-esteem is considered central to the self-concept and is formed also in response to a number of external stimuli, important among which are feelings of efficacy and success, or failure. People with low self-esteem are mainly concerned with self-protection, and avoid chances of failure, rejection and humiliation, whereas people with high self-esteem are mainly concerned with self-enhancement, involving seeking opportunities to achieve, succeed and stand out. Low self-esteem indicates a lack of a clear and definite knowledge of self. People with low self-esteem suffer from a lack of helpful and positive views of themselves and their kind. They desire and enjoy success but their actions are influenced by their doubts that they will be able to achieve it on a regular or frequent basis. They focus on protecting themselves against failure and rejection by, for example, presenting themselves in a cautious or modest fashion (Baumeister 1997).

Self-esteem suffers when an individual lacks self-enhancing goals. Aspiring to, and actively working towards, a clear career goal allows these future role expectations to be incorporated into the current self-concept. Women are not by nature less able than men to set clear vocational goals but their subordinate status within a patriarchal society makes the process difficult (Helson, Pals and Solomon 1997).

As already mentioned, and of particular relevance to my research, adolescence is a particularly important period for developing self-concept. It is often differentiated from other developmental periods by its characteristic 'identity crisis'. At this time young people are often concerned with answering questions such as, 'Who am I?' and 'What will I do with my life?' This manifests itself in the trying out of new roles, the identification of vocational preferences and in the struggle to develop individually from parents and other adults. Role self-perceptions are usually based in traditional gender role stereotypes (Beane and Lipka: 1984). Evidence of the detrimental effects of this for young women in Tanzania has already been discussed.

Schools can enhance the self esteem of students by giving careful attention to how the school affects them and planning to have a positive and constructive effect. Self-esteem is formed by experiences and interactions between the individual and the environment. School represents an important environment and a continuing source of experiences.

Self-esteem and its enhancement are, therefore, an appropriate concern for curriculum planning. Education does have intrinsic value for the female. It should enrich her, add to her self-awareness and self-esteem and open options for her outside of the roles of daughter, wife and mother. Changes in girl's role perceptions have been slow because education curricula, rather than being 'female friendly', are often based on, and reinforce, traditional gender roles (Sohoni 1995: 101).

The development of a positive self-concept should be enhanced through the educational procedures of schools but self-concept involves more than academic issues. One aspect of self-development is a simple understanding of the world outside the self but the more complete process depends on interaction with that world. The materials and resources offered to students should help to enhance self-esteem by depicting the diversity and adequacy of other people. Educational experiences ought to help people to lead satisfying and productive lives in the present and in the future (Beane and Lipka 1984).

As change agents, schools have a responsibility to give a positive outlook to gender relations in society and to take a corrective role in shaping the learners' attitudes and perceptions in the right and desired direction. It is necessary, then, that teaching and learning materials that portray gender balance and positive gender relations are selected or designed for use in schools (Mbilinyi and Omari 1998: 1).

The U N Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women, Article 10, calls upon States Parties to,

...take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in order to ensure to them equal rights with men in the field of education and to ensure:-

(c) The elimination of all stereotyped concepts of the roles of men and women at all levels and in all forms of education by encouraging coeducation and other types of education which will achieve this aim and, in particular, by the revision of text books and school programmes and the adaptation of teaching methods.

The UNESCO report on the Pan African Conference of the Education of Girls, held in Burkino Faso in 1993, notes that "the potential of the school curriculum in attracting and retaining girls has not been given the attention it deserves" and lists as a priority research area the identification of appropriate curriculum content to meet the needs and aspirations of rural and urban dwellers, particularly girls, and the promotion of regional

cooperation in designing gender neutral text books which offer an enhanced perception of the role played by women in society and the world of labour.

Education for girls and women should be relevant to their lives and it must challenge stereotypes of gender roles. All learners, regardless of gender, race, economic status or ability, deserve to find inspiration through education to enable them to contribute to the development of their society (Sweetman 1998: 7).

Compared with other countries in Sub-Saharan Africa, Tanzania has produced an impressive volume of literature on gender and education. "By far the most influential research out put to date is a study undertaken by Marjorie Mbilinyi and associates in 1991 entitled, 'Education in Tanzania with a Gender Perspective'" (Swainson; Bendera; Gordon and Kadzimira 1998: 9). Professor Mbilinyi teaches at the University of Dar es Salaam. She has carried out extensive research into, and written prolifically on, gender issues in Tanzania. She has also spent two years as the Coordinator of the Tanzania Gender Networking Programme.

The Report on Education in Tanzania with a Gender Perspective (Mbilinyi et al 1991: 10), recommends curriculum reform designed to develop a curriculum which will develop the full potential of all pupils regardless of gender, class or ethnicity and outlines steps to follow which include:-

- (1) Evaluate the curriculum in all sub sectors from a gender perspective with special attention to gender typing in the official and hidden curriculum, gender bias in social relations of school and classroom and in teacher pedagogy.

By mid 1997 (and, I suspect, until today) none of the recommendations of the report had been comprehensively addressed (Swainson; Bendera; Gordon and Kadzimira 1998: 9).

Issues of curriculum have been explored by Tanzanian education researchers and the need for a 'female friendly' curriculum identified (Mbilinyi and Mbughuni eds. 1991; Abeli and Ishangoma 1997). However, the fact that gender typing and gender streaming persist in the curriculum is noted in 'Towards Gender Transformative Education in Tanzania'. The contributors applied different analyses to gender relations in education. The qualitative analysis included curriculum content, examination structure, pedagogy, environment, infrastructure and finance. In general, they found that the education system and most of the individual actors within it, acted conservatively to reinforce the status quo; girls and women faced institutionalised sexism throughout the education

system where a 'macho' male environment prevailed at all levels. Among the strategies to overcome gender bias which are suggested are:

Strategy 3.3 Revise the curriculum, books and teaching materials in all subjects, at all levels to remove gender bias and gender-typing in content, and introduce separate and integrated course content concerning gender issues and analysis (Mbilinyi and Mbughuni eds. 1991: 26).

The views expressed in this document are reinforced in a paper prepared by the Ministry of Community Development, Women's and Children's Affairs (1995: 29). "The actual content of the curriculum at all levels is still gender typed". It goes on to claim that curriculum designers, text book writers, audio-visual aids designers, teachers and pupils have their perceptions shaped by the prevailing oppressive gender relations and women seem to be playing a very marginal role in producing formal knowledge.

Caroline Sweetman suggests that an important barrier to girl's achievement which has tended to be ignored is gender stereotyping in the curriculum, especially in textbooks, "where girls tend to be portrayed as passive, modest and shy, while boys are seen as assertive, brave and ambitious" (Sweetman 1998: 14). "Education has to take into account the actual and not the stereotyped experiences and lives of women and girls" according to Gaby Weiner (1985: 10). She believes a curriculum needs to be provided which draws on the past and present experiences of women and girls thereby giving them a sense of solidarity with other members of their sex and strengthening their motivation.

The removal of gender bias in learning materials is a step towards the empowerment of women and girls. Defining empowerment in a similar way to Friere's concept of conscientisation this need not necessarily be detrimental to boys. It should lead to individuals gaining an understanding of their circumstances in relation to their social environment as a precursor to action (Rowlands 1997: 16). Empowerment of women within the community may be beneficial for both boys' and girls' education. Increasing women's confidence and authority should increase their earning capacity and give them greater voice within the community, and particularly schools, as mothers. In turn, this should increase the accountability of the school and improve relations between school and community. Education is both a cause and a solution to women's unequal status within society (Peasgood; Bendera; Abrahams and Kisanga 1996).

Some degree of preoccupation with these issues has been evident in the developed world for the past few decades, often with a focus on gender bias in reading materials.

Obura (1991) writes of the significance of books:

Books, for their part, are image forming and vital sources of information. The book, like the teacher who applies it, is an authority. It is a symbol of modernity (however defined), and of development. Books are a durable pedagogical resource and the socialisation of children through the medium of the school text book is significant in several ways. Firstly, books are carriers of authoritative messages on models of people, behaviour and thought patterns which, by implication, are good to copy. Given that the school itself is a site of prestige and authority, textbooks are taken seriously. Secondly, text books exert both an intellectual and an affective influence on pupils. The affective influence is felt, in particular in the way notions of conformity in roles, conformity in behaviour, conformity in ideology are preached and enforced in schools. Thirdly, text books are the flag carriers for the new standardized ideals, culture norms and values spread quickly and then sustained throughout the country. Fourthly the text book is the basic tool for access to approved, 'official' and legitimate knowledge. The scrutiny of this important medium for the manner in which gender roles are portrayed and thereby sustained, imparted and implanted in the esoteric spaces reposing in the minds of young children in the context of the educational system therefore assumes critical importance for educational development (Obura 1991 in Brickhill, Hoppers and Pehrsson 1996: 10).

The following extract illustrates the gender stereotyped material with which young children are frequently presented:

That is the girl who brought the pot  
 She carries a bucket of water on her head  
 She is singing a song  
 She is frying eggs  
 She is sweeping the floor

(Grammar drill from English for Primary School Series: Tanzania in Mbilinyi and Omari 1998)

The image of this girl is firmly rooted in the gendered division of labour and the reader is not likely to imagine the girl taking a leading role in 'public life'. She is symptomatic of female representation in many text books still in use in Tanzania today.

A survey carried out by Dorothy Mbilinyi in 1991 revealed that the gender relations portrayed in primary school text books are highly traditional with men shown as leaders, decision makers, owners of wealth, administrators and power holders and women shown as performers of domestic chores, recipients of orders and directions and facilitators of life for men.

This confirmed the results of earlier research carried out by Charles Kaligula (in Brock-Utne and Katunzi 1990: 25/26). He examined illustrations in 23 text books produced by the Institute of Curriculum Development, found significant sex-role stereotyping, and recommended that policy documents and course programmes and syllabuses, as the foundation for thinking and writing, should be analysed for gender bias.

Writing in 1996 Mbilinyi acknowledged the importance of school text books in relaying messages both written and pictorial and in moulding and shaping the attitudes of learners and their way of thinking. She explored several themes which recur in the texts such as heroism, work skills and roles and responsibilities and found their presentation revealed a definite bias with men and boys being shown in heroic roles and mastering difficult, technical and scientific skills and in roles of leadership and power while women are relegated to domestic roles and household chores. Commenting on the imbalanced pictorial gender presentation Mbilinyi says,

Both male and female learners would like their images to feature in books. The use of pictures is one way to attract children to use those books. Those whose characters feature most are, therefore, more encouraged to read and to struggle with academics than those who feature less frequently.

She goes on to maintain that this kind of imbalance contributes to the existing unequal access to higher education for boys and girls. Girls are discouraged from the very early years of schooling by the existing educational materials.

Mbilinyi (1996) agrees with the view that the elements of inequality in educational materials exist because they are a reflection of society as a whole and the place of women in Tanzanian society has been regarded as peripheral. Since education materials are a powerful tool for change, it was considered that school text book designers should be made aware of gender issues and their importance. The situation has been self-perpetuating. Because of their lack of education, few women have participated in book design and writing and men, considering themselves as the architects of society, are the

beneficiaries of this gender imbalance and continue to shape society in the same direction through publishing.

Mbilinyi advocated a deliberate effort to intervene and in 1996 / 7 'A Study on the Existence of Gender Imbalance and Stereotyping in Tanzania Textbooks' was carried out and a report of the findings written by Mbilinyi and Beatrice Omari. The objectives of the study were:

- to find out if gender imbalances exist and, if they do-
  - to establish guidelines for authors, illustrators and publishers of textbooks in order to eliminate gender imbalance and sex role stereotyping in text books.
- (1998: 2)

Text books and supplementary books for all current subjects taught and all primary levels were sampled.

While acknowledging that some efforts were already being made to rectify the imbalance in gender presentation, the authors of the report clearly thought there was a long way to go. In their analysis they took into account cultural and social expectations, however they attempted to test what children see and read and to what role models they are exposed. They identify a 'good gender sensitive text book' as one which depicts men sharing with women in family and child related activities and women and girls taking part in technical, professional and academic activities. Such books will question the accepted definitions of 'masculinity' and 'femininity' and will help pupils to discuss issues of involvement and equality openly and girls to understand their reality and perceive strategies for change.

The researchers found that there continues to be disparities in the presentation of men and women and boys and girls by testing the samples in a number of ways, for example, numbers of male and female names, numbers of pictures of males and females, occupations of female and male characters. Some efforts towards change were noted but the tendency to give domestic and traditional 'female' activities to women and 'masculine' / developmental occupations to men persists. Where there is a role reversal it usually involves children. Women's domestic activities are usually shown in 'traditional' settings such as cooking on a three stone fire place, while men's activities take place in more technologically advanced settings. Men are shown as resourceful and capable of complicated and demanding professions and when the samples were tested

for 'leadership / power / authority' roles, 46 men were shown as opposed to 18 women, see Table 4.3.

TABLE 4.3 Gender Analysis of Capacities and Achievements in Primary School Text Books in Tanzania.

ACTIVITY / SITUATION	MALES INDICATED	FEMALES INDICATED
With capacity to purchase commodities	7	4
Scoring high marks in school	2	1
Selling farm produce	2	-
Building own house	1	-
With ability to solve a maths problem	2	-
Owning a farm	3	1
Owning property / animals	4	2
Making bricks for building	4	-
Improvisation of engineering work	1	-
With ability to drive a car / bus	6	4
Teaching	14	13
With ability to ride a bicycle / motorbike	7	3
Working as a tailor	1	3
Driving a lorry	3	-
With good performance in class	4	2
Saving a drowning friend	2	-
With professional skills: fishing, masonry, surgeon, head teacher	5	-
Total	73	36

Source: Mbilinyi D. and Omari B. (1998: 15)

Consciously or unconsciously, authors, illustrators and publishers discourage girls from opting for technical / academic oriented occupations while opening these doors to the

boys. In the light of research yet to be discussed the pronounced 'absence' of women and girls is significant.

The authors also note a bias in the use of names. Men and boys have their own name but frequently women and girls are subordinated by having names which relate them to the men in their family thus depriving them of that important identity which signifies their separate existence. Further analysis of the books on the basis of 'personal capacity and achievement' shows a definite male bias in the portrayal of achievement and assertiveness. It is even noted that where both males and females are featured in purchasing commodities the females are shown buying domestically oriented items while the males buy bigger and more durable assets such as bicycles, radios, books, livestock and machinery. Men are also depicted as the 'rightful' owners of family and community wealth despite women's contribution to both.

The study goes on to give guidelines for publishers, illustrators and authors and to suggest content for courses to be held for these people and to make a number of recommendations to the Ministry of Education and Culture, publishers, parents and other stake holders. It also acted as a spring board for my own research.

The reading material of students is not confined to textbooks. Primary school children are exposed to supplementary readers and, ideally, library books, and this exposure and study continues on into the secondary school where students study 'literature' in Swahili and English. The reading of stories can be a powerful emotional and intellectual experience as well as a strong, conscious or unconscious, socialising force. It may be a positive or a negative experience and research shows that the experience may vary according to the sex of the reader.

Michael Hanne (1994: 11) suggested that,

Story telling serves in general, to reinforce an existing social order and existing power structures. Traditional narrative structures are, therefore, part of a system of psychological dependencies that inhibit social growth and significant social change.....it (story telling) functions in any political system to socialise the coming generation, to legitimate political institutions, to perpetuate established mores and mythology and to rationalise official policies.

He adds that,

Historical writing, by and large, privileges the experience of the dominant class, race and gender by failing to record the experience or perspective of subordinate groups.

Patriarchal ideology, for example, is reinforced in a number of ways, including the spoken and written story, so that the subordinated group, women, unwittingly learn patterns of thought—stereotypes about themselves which serve to intensify their subordination by making it appear natural. However, literature may perform a positive, empowering and liberating role and act as an impetus to change. Michael Kadege (1998: 11) suggests that, “Literature should relate its art to social issues....(it) can easily deliver messages, reveal the evils in society and conscientize people to react against injustice and oppression.” Consequently, it is imperative that students are exposed to the ‘right’ books.

In Tanzania most ‘local’ children’s books are produced by the Children’s Book Project, which was established in 1991. The objectives of the project are:-

- to produce children’s books in Swahili in order to improve children’s reading ability, and
- to encourage and support indigenous authorship, publishing, designing, printing and book sales (Rugumyamheto 1999: 3).

The quality of the books is carefully controlled and they have proved very popular. However, analysis of submitted books on the basis of gender sensitivity showed that gender stereotyping, particularly in relation to occupation, is still prevalent in both the text and the illustrations. Of the 130 titles that had been published, (in 1999) only 24 were written by women and there were no women illustrators (Rugumyamheto 1999: 3).

Research was commissioned, in Tanzania, to establish:-

- whether books written by women are more gender sensitive than those written by men.
- what message the pictures give students in relation to their career aspirations.

The results of this research, which was undertaken by Alice Rugumyamheto, showed that women authors seem to favour women and girls as main characters. It also showed that gender stereotyping is prevalent in children’s books written by both men and women, particularly when depicting women in terms of personal capacity and achievement, ownership of wealth and use of technology and skills. The gender bias in text books noted by Mbilinyi and Omari was evident in fiction as well. There was some

evidence that books and teachers had some influence over career choices which remained very traditional. The report of the research recommends encouragement and training for women writers and illustrators and gender sensitivity training for all those involved in the production of these books.

Research carried out in the industrialised world shows that the gender based stereotypes to which young students are introduced through text books and other reading materials are reinforced by the literature they study in secondary school. In his investigation of stereotyped images of women in the literature studied by high school students in the USA, Walta Ruff (1973: 8), found that, worse than the negative images of women, was “the absence of women: either total absence of female characters or absence of female characters who are fully developed as people or who contribute to the unfolding of significant story action”. He shares the view, already expressed, that the images of women portrayed in the books are a reflection of the situation within, and expectation of, society. Girls and young women are exposed to images in literature that encourage them to accept society’s definitions and there is little to help them to withstand this moulding. Defying a stereotype is difficult because first the reader needs the skills to recognise it. The process of identification is, in itself, a process of consciousness raising.

Ruff mentions the prevalence of the conflicting images of women as sex objects or seductresses and as docile, submissive, satisfied homemakers. The worst possible fate is to remain unmarried. The images of boys and men, on the other hand, are active and aggressive with the ability to meet challenges victoriously and these images dominate most of the books selected for study. Ruff notes the negative effects of many of these books which celebrate aggression and violence, on male students.

Males with literary models such as these are victimized just as much as women are. Males are encouraged to perpetuate separation between what men can do and what women can do. They are encouraged to subordinate their own inclinations to all feelings that society designated as ‘feminine’ and to patronize these inclinations in other people, even in females.

Ruff concludes that:

Young women who accept society’s definition of them (as portrayed in the literature) have no self definition as individuals; they have nothing to withstand the strength of the stereotype’s moulding (Ruff 1973: 10)

A study of fiction supplied to secondary school English classes in New Zealand agrees with the US findings and notes, in particular, the prevailing attitude at that time, 1980, that it did not matter what girls were given to read as they would read anyway, the implication being that boys and their likes and dislikes were of paramount importance (Taylor 1980: 9). It also emphasises that, although the stereotyped images of what women and girls do are important as socialising agencies, it is the lack of any alternative images of possibilities open to them which has such a limiting effect on their self esteem and aspirations.

The idea that it does not matter if the books are predominantly male oriented, since it is the quality of the book itself that counts, rather than the content, is refuted since the power of books to influence the reader comes from 'what' they say as well as 'how' they say it (Taylor 1980: 10).

The same point was made as early as 1968 by Howard Klein when he wrote of 'Interest and Comprehension in Sex-Typed Materials'. He found that boys and girls react in different ways to the same content. For boys the prime factor in determining the appeal of a book is the occupation of the main character and second is the sex of the character. For girls the primary factor in determining interest was the sex of the main character. His study confirmed that both boys and girls prefer to read about characters of their own sex and showed that both girls and boys perform with greater efficiency when reading materials they specifically enjoy. They do not comprehend as well when their interest is not aroused.

He concludes his study in this way:-

Concern for meeting girl's interests should be no less than concern for meeting boy's interests. Failure to meet girl's interests could limit what girls are able to learn...The search for experimental selections revealed that publishers appear to ignore the interests of girls and often avoid using female characters. The bulk of materials are concerned with what boys do and like.....The evidence of this study suggests that inordinate use of predominantly male content violates the best interests of girls and therefore is educationally unsound (Klein 1968, in Taylor 1980: 8).

My research aimed to determine if the criticisms and comments made by these researchers could be applied also to the literature in English studied by A level students in Tanzanian secondary schools.

## CHAPTER 5

### THE RESEARCH – DOCUMENTARY REVIEW

My research was divided into two parts. First, I carried out a documentary review in which I read most of the literature texts on the A level English syllabus and carried out a detailed analysis, on the basis of the images of women and the gender relations which they portrayed, of the eight books which I was advised by teachers are studied most frequently. (The choices that teachers make are not free of course since all schools have very limited resources.) Secondly I administered questionnaires to sixth form English students in five schools. In this chapter I will present the findings of the documentary review and comment on these. The results of the questionnaire will be presented in the next chapter. My research was guided by the questions outlined in Chapter One.

The Objectives of Tanzanian Secondary Education emphasise the importance of national development, self confidence, the development of personal identity, integrity, recognition of human rights, and the preparation of students for tertiary study and the world of work. The goals of education which are included in the English Syllabus (Appendix 1) include,

- a) To guide and promote the development and improvement of the personalities of the citizens of Tanzania, their human resources and effective utilization of these resources in bringing about individual and national development.
- b) To promote and develop self confidence, and an enquiring mind, under-standing and respect for dignity and human rights and readiness to work hard for personal, self-advancement and national improvement.

The study of English Literature is one aspect of the study of English at forms five and six, A level, but may well form the foundation on which the other elements are laid. The study of literature is an ideal avenue for achieving the goals and objectives mentioned above. It is, therefore, imperative that the literature to be studied is chosen carefully, with a view to presenting the stimulus to discussion, the relevant issues and the variety

of life experiences and role models which will lead to the achievement of these goals. The chosen literature should be enjoyable also and relevant to all the students and it should deal with issues, either historical or topical, with which they can relate.

Since half of Tanzania's citizens are female, and as shown in Chapter Four, Table 4.1, half of the students enrolled in class one are girls, the choice of books should show cognisance of this fact. The current list of books from which A level Literature teachers can choose the books to be studied does not include a single book written by a woman. It is clear, then, that both male and female students are exposed only to the views and opinions of men. In other words, society as perceived by one half of that society. As an example of male bias in the curriculum, I suggest that this, potentially, has a far reaching effect on both male and female students and a close analysis of representative books from the fiction section of the book list bears this out.

Adeola James (1990) in the introduction to 'In Their Own Voices – African Writers Talk', claims that "...writers as cultural workers are not apart from other workers in their society. A deep seated desire to contribute to the debates and struggles for development that are going on in their time is what inspires their writing." It is reasonable to suggest, then, that directed readers, such as students, should be exposed to as wide a range of contributions as possible, including the views and opinions of women writers.

To claim that the writer is unbiased and depicts society as 'he' sees it can only be substantiated in so far as 'his' view is a very limited and unchallenged one. In many cases he merely reproduces the view which he has been conditioned to accept and lacks the ability or will to challenge this. However one cannot distinguish the literary from the political. At best the lack of awareness of women as real people and contributors to the development of their society can be seen as ignorance; at worst, as a deliberate patriarchal conspiracy to reinforce the subjugation of women and the expression of their value and their needs.

In her feminist review of 'Things Fall Apart', Florence Stratton (1994) provides a useful yardstick for analysis. She acknowledges the critical acclaim for the novel and that it is considered to have "blazed a trail" large enough to be followed by other writers and that this novel provides "a pattern for countless other novels" and serves as "an

arbiter of critical standards” (Gerald Moore, in Stratton 1994: 23). She goes on to indicate the disadvantages of this. She quotes Achebe’s realization, on reading colonial writers, “that stories are not innocent, that they can be used to put you in the wrong crowd, in the party of the man who has come to dispossess you” (pg. 23), and continues by using his ‘realisation’ to question his own depiction of women in ‘Things Fall Apart’, where women are definitely in the ‘wrong crowd’. The status of women in Umuofia, the setting of the novel, is very low and, as if to accentuate their insignificance, they are marginalized by the text. Stratton points out that, although Achebe is intent as a writer to restore the dignity and self-respect of African people, nothing in this novel constitutes a challenge to the negative view of women expressed by the narrator or the male characters, “not only does the male inner voice fail to question the harsh injustice done to women, the female voice is utterly mute” ( Stratton 1994: 34). The status quo of male domination is not questioned and Stratton asks, “Does Achebe attempt to restore ‘dignity and self respect’ to African women?” (pg. 24). Where can the African woman, reading the novel, place herself? How can it assist her in self-realisation and development?

I have commented on this novel and Florence Stratton’s critique of it as the novel is studied widely throughout Africa and elsewhere, and has been a significant influence on readers and writers alike. In Tanzania it is included in the O level English course and we therefore can presume that all students studying at A level are familiar with the novel, the society which it depicts and the issues with which it deals.

The body of African literature, of which ‘Things Fall Apart’ is an early and influential example, is written largely in French and English and emerged as Africans took up the struggle for their independence and gained it. It shares common themes and Adeola James, (1990) lists these.

1. The devastating effect of Africa’s contact with Europe.
2. The rehabilitation of Africa’s cultural heritage to mitigate, heal or correct some of the injuries inflicted by colonization.
3. Conflict between the traditional world and the modern world – polygamy, infidelity, corruption and abuse of power.

The themes of the eight books from the A level course, considered to be those most frequently studied, are closely aligned to James's list. A close analysis of these eight books, and a study of others, shows that many of the books also have in common the images of women which they portray. In general women are shown as:

1. marginal to the affairs of men, that is, the important issues of life.
2. subordinate and submissive to the wishes of men.
3. unworthy of the respect and affection of men.
4. decorative possessions to enhance the status of men.
5. providers of the needs of men.

Or, alternatively, as didactic heroines whose function within the novel denies them psychological development.

Sonia Lee (1979) puts it this way, "The female protagonist throughout the African novel presents a certain homogeneity of character which can be attributed to a basic similarity in the man's view of the woman.....through the role of the woman the writer may be re-examining man's role in his changing society. Consequently the heroine often has a didactic function which deters her from psychological development." Furthermore, the female character often plays a secondary role in the novel, frequently being placed in the fixed context of the village where she illustrates traditional life. In the changing contemporary society she seems to remain the constant factor because the social changes imposed on traditional life by modern times are seen almost exclusively in the life drama of the male protagonist.

My analysis of the eight most frequently studied books, on the basis of gender relations and images of women, follows.

## **ARROW OF GOD**

A novel by Chinua Achebe (Nigerian) First published 1964

Edition used 1986 Heinemann African Writers Series

This tale of Ezeulu, the chief priest of Ulu, who sees himself as 'the arrow of God', is set in Nigeria in the early days of the colonial administration. Like 'Things Fall Apart',

it deals with the break down of traditional society and its values. It tells of the activities of the men of the six villages of Umuaro, of the encroachment of the colonial administration, symbolised by the building of the road, and the influence gradually gained by the Christian church. All of these things spell out the loss of Ezeulu's influence and power. In the novel's concentration on male concerns and activities, it relegates the female members of the community to totally peripheral positions.

Ezeulu has two wives, Matefi and Ugoye. His first wife has already died and his oldest son is already married. His second son marries during the course of the story. These wives, plus Ezeulu's four daughters, attend to the smooth running of his household. Not only are they peripheral to events, their lives and work are shown to be insignificant in comparison with that of the men who almost always speak of, and to, them in derogatory terms.

This is illustrated early in the novel when Ezeulu's son, Obika, rushes to him distraught one night having seen an apparition. When "his teeth begin to knock together again" Ezeulu tells him "Hold yourself together. You are not a woman...." (pg. 8). Also early in the novel Ezeulu's thoughts are disturbed by the voices of the women returning from the stream with water for the household. He addresses his youngest son, Nwafo. "Are these not the people I saw going to the stream before the sun went down?"

"Yes," said Nwafo. "They went to Nwangene." "I see" (pg. 7). Despite the fact that the nearby stream has been abandoned and the women have had to fetch water from far off, Ezeulu is annoyed and his annoyance surfaces later in the evening when he complains of his late meal.

"I don't know how many times I have said in this house that I shall not eat my supper when every other man in Umuaro is retiring to sleep,' he said as soon as Matefi came in. 'But you will not listen. To you whatever I say in this house is no more effective than the fart a dog breaks to put out a fire...'" (pg. 9).

"I went all the way to Nwangene to fetch water and...."

"If you like you may go to Nkisa. What I am saying is that if you want that madness of yours to be cured, bring my supper at this time another day...." (pg.9).

Clearly Ezeulu's attitude to women has been passed on to his son Obika, as we see in the following passage. "Just when Ojiugo and her mother were about to begin their meal, Obika came home singing and whistling.

'Bring me his bowl,' said Matefi. 'He is early today.'

Obika stooped at the low eaves and came in hands first.....Matefi blew into the soup bowl to remove dust and ash and ladled soup into it. Ojiugo set it before her brother.....After the first swallow Obika tilted the bowl of soup towards the light and inspected it critically.

'What do you call this, soup or cocoyam porridge?'" (pg. 10)

Ezeulu's daughter by his first wife, Akuele, is staying in her father's compound having left her husband due to his ill treatment of her. The occasion of her in-laws coming to seek for her return gives the reader some insight into the system of 'bride price'. To the in-laws Ezeulu suggests that they should cover the cost of food for Akuele and her child.

"'What I want to know,' said Ezeulu, 'is how you will pay me for taking care of your wife for one year.' 'In-law I understand you very well,' said Onwuzuligbo.

'Leave everything to us. You know that a man's debt to his father-in-law can never be fully discharged. When we buy a goat or a cow we pay for it and it becomes our own. But when we marry a wife we go on paying until we die....'"

Ezeulu's brother is also present. He recounts his perceived reasons for a man to marry.

".....Different people have different reasons for marrying. Apart from children which we all want, some men want a woman to cook their meals, some want a woman to help on the farm, others want someone they can beat." (pg. 62/63).

He then ensures that Akueke will be better treated in future.

The occasion of the in-law's visit called for special preparation so Ezeulu sent for Matefi and told her to get ready to cook for his in-laws tomorrow. "'Which in laws?' she asked.

‘Akuele’s husband and his people.’

‘There is no cassava in my hut and today is not a market.’

‘So what do you want me to do?’ asked Ezeulu.

‘I don’t want you to do anything. But Akuele may have some cassava if you ask her.’”  
(pg. 62).

This perfectly reasonable request is greeted with derision.

“‘This madness which they say you have must now begin to know its bounds.....Don’t let me speak my mind to you today,’ he paused. ‘If you want this compound to contain the two of us go and do what I told you.....Go away from here before I rise from my feet’” (pg. 62).

The reader must take it as read that she does.

Still related to cooking, the action moves to Ogoye’s kitchen. We learn that, like Matefi, she is often late with cooking however she is wise enough to be on time when cooking for Ezeulu and thus avoids his wrath. At this time however, “on account of her uncleanness” (pg. 64) she is forbidden to cook for any grown man.

A high point in the corporate life of the people of Umuaro is the Festival of the Pumpkin Leaves. Women appear to take a prominent role in the festival and attend it dressed in their finest clothes and ornaments and carrying freshly cut pumpkin leaves. The arrival at the festival of the five wives of Nwaka causes a stir and is described in some detail.

Each of them wore not anklets but two enormous rollers of ivory reaching from the ankle almost to the knee. Their walk was perforce slow and deliberate, like the walk of an Ijele Mask lifting and lowering each foot with weighty ceremony. On top of all this the women were clad in many coloured velvets. Ivory and velvets were not new in Umuaro but never before had they been seen in such profusion from the house of one man (pg. 68).

The women are viewed as a display of their husband’s wealth and showing off their finery has the effect of confining their movement.

Although Ezeulu is touched by what happens to his children, he does not share his feelings with their mothers. When Obika is whipped by the white overseer for arriving late for road building work, he is distressed and puzzled. However when he notices Obika's mother crying he sneers, "I see that those who will fight the white men are lining up."..... Go back to your hut woman!" (pg. 88).

Ezeulu quarrels with Obika and this gives rise to Edego, the oldest son, contemplating the father's relationship with each of his sons. Clearly, the idea that Ezeulu could, or would, form any kind of relationship with his daughters does not occur to Edego. This idea of relationships is extended, and the lack of women's personal identity is clarified, when Ezeulu discusses Obika's position with Nwafo, his youngest son.

'A man does not speak a lie to his son,' he said. 'Remember that always. To say *my father told me* is to swear the greatest oath. You are only a little boy, but I was no older than you when my father began to confide in me. Do you hear what I am saying?'

Nwafo said yes.

'You see what has happened to your brother. In a few days his bride will come and he will no longer be called a child. When strangers see him they will no longer ask *Whose son is he?* but *Who is he?* Of his wife they will no longer say *Whose daughter?* But *Whose wife?* Do you understand me?' (pg. 93)

The manner in which Ezeulu speaks to his wives and the lack of respect shown to them is illustrated again in the following passage.

'Nwafo!.....Nwafo!' called Ezeulu.

'Nwafo has gone to the stream,' replied his mother from her hut.

'Nwafo has what?' Ezeulu shouted back.

Ugoye decided to go into the hut in person and explain that Nwafo had gone on his own account.

'Nobody asked him to go,' she said.

'Nobody asked him to go?' retorted Ezeulu parodying a child's talk.

'Did you say that nobody asked him to go? Do you not know that he sweeps my hut every morning?.....' (pg. 124).

Needless to say the unfortunate Ugoye sweeps the hut for the sake of peace.

Ezeulu is sent for by the white administrator, Winterbottom, and is then held in exile due to the administrator's sickness. He is visited there by his friend, Akuebue, and they discuss Akuebue's daughter Udenkwo. She has left her marriage because she feels unfairly treated but Akuebue expresses scant sympathy for her, accusing her of pride. Ezeulu philosophises and quotes his father.

*In our custom a man is not expected to go down on his knees and knock his forehead on the ground to his wife to ask his forgiveness or beg a favour. But, a wise man knows that between him and his wife there may arise the need for him to say in secret: 'I beg you.' When such a thing happens nobody else must know it, and that woman if she has any sense will never boast about it or even open her mouth and speak of it. If she does it the earth on which the man brought himself low will destroy her entirely (pg. 172).*

Ezeulu then relates this advice to Udenkwo's situation and his summary underscores the position of women in his and, no doubt, countless other households.

I have never forgotten those words of my father's. My wife's cock belongs to me because the owner of a person is also the owner of whatever that person has. But there are more ways than one of killing a dog (pg. 173).

When Ezeulu finally returns from exile to his home there is great rejoicing. "In the course of the second day he counted fifty-seven visitors excluding the women" (pg. 187). The women are not counted because they don't count and their exclusion here represents the way in which they are portrayed throughout the novel.

## **A MAN OF THE PEOPLE**

A novel by Chinua Achebe First published 1966

Edition used 1988 Heinemann African Writers Series

This novel exposes the corruption and immorality of the 'people's government' established in Nigeria after the country gained independence from Britain. The story is narrated by Odili, a young school teacher, who, in the opening of the novel, questions the excessive preparations being made for the visit of the local M.P. Chief the Honourable M A. Nanga. However before the visit is completed, Odili has been impressed by the Minister's attention and lured into staying with him in the city in order to approach his cabinet colleague about a scholarship for postgraduate study in London.

In the city Odili enjoys himself in the minister's home until they fall out over a young woman. Odili leaves the house and goes to stay with his university friend Max. Max, now a lawyer, is engaged to another young lawyer, Eunice, and, together with a group of friends, they have started a political party in opposition to the government. Odili joins them and goes home to represent the party in his home constituency and in

opposition to the Minister, Chief Nanga.

At the time of the minister's first visit Odili had been attracted by a beautiful young woman in the minister's party, Edna, and he learns that she is to become the minister's second wife. Once home, he attempts to dissuade Edna from the marriage but he is rejected soundly by her father.

CPO, the new political party, attempts to fight an election cleanly but is soon dragged into 'dirty' politics. Odili is beaten up when he attempts to infiltrate a political rally of the minister's and is hospitalised and unable to contest the election. In the city Max is shot and Eunice is imprisoned. At this point the army stages a coup and all government ministers are imprisoned. Without the minister as a prospective son-in-law, Edna's father begins marriage negotiations with Odili and his father and Odili looks forward to marriage and to starting his own school in memory of Max.

This novel is particularly important as Chinua Achebe is so well regarded as a novelist. His novel 'Things Fall Apart' is used as a foundation to the study of Literature in English at General Certificate of Education (O) level, and his other works are widely studied. In 'A Man of The People', as in 'Things Fall Apart' and 'Arrow of God', it is difficult to identify a positive portrayal of a woman. Although Odili views himself as a moral and progressive young man, helping to challenge the corruption of the government and usher in a new age, he fails to question the patriarchal norms of his society. In fact his attitudes contribute to the acceptance of conventional gender characteristics in the novel. The female characters are almost all presented either as decorative objects for sexual pleasure or as subservient 'help meets' of the male characters.

At the time of the minister's visit to Anata village, his party includes Mrs Eleanor John, "an influential party woman from the coast who had come in the Minister's party" (pg.17). Mrs. John seems able to hold her own in the male company, smoking, laughing and joking. She is described as "a very close friend of the minister", a woman who has done well for herself, "Poor beginning – an orphan, I believe – no school education, plenty of good looks and an iron determination, both of which she put to good account; beginning as a street hawker, rising to a small trader, and then to a big one worth hundreds of thousands" (pg. 15). Despite this obvious business acumen, she is made to look somewhat ridiculous in her heavy makeup and perfume and wearing her "massive

coral beads rumoured to be worth hundreds of pounds.” She attempts to speak up about women’s rights but is cut short.

Also in the party is a beautiful young woman who attracts Odili’s attention as, “She looked as though they had stopped by some convent on their way and offered to give her a lift to the next one” (pg.14). She is introduced to no one by the minister and when Odili inquires of a journalist he learns that she is the minister’s girl friend or cousin. The reader learns later that this is Edna. Odili’s friend Andrew gives him more information, telling him, “He is planning to marry her according to native law and custom. Apparently his missus is too ‘bush’ for his present position so he wants a bright new ‘parlour-wife’ to play hostess at his parties” (pg.22).

One of Odili’s motives in going to the capital city is to spend time with Elsie. Odili describes her as “the only girl I met and slept with in the same day”, (pg.25) and goes on to detail their meeting, their first, and subsequent sexual encounters. Elsie is engaged to a medical student in Edinburgh but this does not prevent Odili and her from forming a firm friendship and continuing sexual relationship the morality of which is never questioned by Odili. Of Elsie he says, “Elsie was such a beautiful, happy girl and she made no demands whatever” (pp.25). After university they correspond on a regular basis and Odili looks forward to spending time with her as she is nursing close to the capital. He visits her and an arrangement is made for he and Chief Nanga to have a night out with Elsie and her friend. On the way to the hospital to pick up the ‘girls’ Chief Nanga questions Odili: “Tell me something, Odili. How serious are you about this girl Elsie?”

“You mean about marriage – Good Lord, no! She is just a good time girl” (pg.59). At this point Odili, as narrator, acknowledges the unfairness of his description, saying, “Although what I said about marriage was true enough, yet it was grossly unfair at that stage in my relationship with Elsie to call her simply a good time girl. I suppose what happened was that Chief Nanga and I, having already swapped many tales of conquests I felt somehow compelled to speak in derogatory terms about women in general” (pg.59).

Elsie’s friend is ill and cannot accompany them so the three of them attend a Book Exhibition which the minister officially opens. They return to the minister’s house, where Elsie is to stay, and the evening culminates in Elsie sleeping with the minister.

Odili is deeply shocked and expects Elsie to be remorseful. "For I knew she would come down shedding tears of shame and I would kick her out and bang the door after her for ever" (pg.70). When she does not appear, Odili goes out walking and puzzles over how he will speak to Chief Nanga. Elsie he does not consider worth speaking to. "As for Elsie I should have known that she was a common harlot and the less said about her the better" (pg.71). Odili rejects Chief Nanga's attempts at reconciliation. "Wonders will never end! Is it about the girl? But you told me you were not serious with her; I asked you because I don't like any misunderstanding" (pg.72), and storms out of the house. With Odili's hypocritical assessment of her, Elsie exits the text.

It is in the capital that the reader first encounters Chief Nanga's wife. Odili had known her previously when the minister had been his standard three teacher. Odili describes her.

For a mother of seven Mrs. Nanga was and still is very well kept. Her face unlike her husband's had become blurred in my memory. But on seeing her now it all came back again. She was bigger now of course – almost matronly. Her face was one of the friendliest I had ever seen (pg.32).

He seems to admire the compliant attitude she shows toward her marriage. "Any woman who marries a minister,' said his wife later as we sat watching TV, 'has married worse than a night watchman.' We both laughed. There was no hint of complaint in her voice. She was clearly a homely, loyal wife prepared for the penalty of her husband's greatness" (pg.33).

Having observed a photograph of Edna in the living room, Odili questions Mrs. Nanga;

'Is this your sister?' I asked.

'Edna. No, she is our wife.'

'Your wife? How?'

She laughed. We are getting a second wife to help me' (pg.36).

Later Mrs. Nanga and the children travel home to their village for a visit and the minister and Odili are to dine with American friends of the minister, Jean and John. The plans are upset by the arrival of Barrister Mrs. Akilo.... "a most sophisticated looking young woman" (pg.47). Odili feels awkward before her assurance but reassures himself by assuming she will sleep with the barely literate Chief Nanga. The minister excuses himself from the dinner party in order to spend the time with Mrs. Akilo and Odili goes alone to the dinner party where he finds that John has also been called away. After the departure of the other guests Odili remains with Jean. His reactions to her are mainly

positive, however he appears to have little understanding of her views and attitudes, mistrusts her motives and denies her the right to have an opinion on anything African. When he departs he asks to see her again. However she too is dropped from the text.

In Max's house Odili is introduced to the new political party, the Common People's Convention, and attends a meeting of the foundation members which include Max's fiancée, Eunice. Odili describes her; "The only lady there was a beautiful lawyer who, I learned afterwards, was engaged to Max whom she had first met at the London School of Economics" (pg.77).

On this occasion Eunice speaks in order to refute Odili's suggestion that the party seemed to "be made up of only professional men and women" (pg.78). Others point out his errors and the reader learns Eunice's opinion. Odili reveals himself by his reaction to it. "'And the unemployed of course,' said the young lady with that confidence of a beautiful woman who has brains as well which I find a little intimidating" (pg.78).

When Odili first addresses the group, he begins, "It is very kind of you gentlemen and lady – I say gentlemen and lady advisedly as this happens to be Africa" (pg.78). Later Max uses the expression similarly and Eunice protests. After Odili joins the party and goes home to publicise it and to campaign for election, his reported political interaction is entirely with Max and other men until the campaign team arrives from the capital to assist him. Odili appears to view Eunice only in the light of her relationship with Max when he describes their arrival. "There were a dozen other people with him, only two of whom I knew already – Eunice, his fiancée, and the trade unionist, Joe.....I envied Max his beautiful dedicated girl; some people are simply lucky" (pg.121).

The campaign begins to gain momentum and while Max speaks to the crowd, Odili observes Eunice;

Seeing Max and Eunice once again, sharing every excitement, had made my mouth water, to put it crudely. As Max made his speech I had found myself watching Eunice's beautiful profile. She sat at the edge of her chair, wringing her clasped hands like a nervous schoolgirl. Her lips seemed to be forming the same words that he was uttering. Perhaps it was this delicious picture of feminine loyalty that led me next day to go in search of Edna (pg.127).

Odili compares Edna, with whom he is in love, with Eunice.

Edna might not be a lawyer or sophisticated in the nail-varnish, eye brow-shadow line like Eunice,.....as far as I was concerned she had just the right amount of education. I had nothing against professional women – in fact I liked them in their way – but if emancipation meant

people like that other lady lawyer who came to sleep with illiterate Chief Nanga for twenty five pounds a time, then they could keep it (pg 127).

Eunice appears again at the time of Max's death. Max goes to investigate election irregularities. "But as soon as he alighted from his car, one of Chief Koko's jeeps swept up from behind, knocked him over and killed him on the spot" (pg. 143). The investigating police turn out to be Chief Koko's thugs and Chief Koko appears himself saying he will look after everything. Odili describes Eunice's reaction;

Eunice had been missed by a few inches when Max had been felled. She stood like a store figure, I was told, for some minutes more. Then she opened her handbag as if to take out a handkerchief, took out a pistol instead and fired two bullets into Chief Koko's chest. Only then did she fall down on Max's body and begin to weep like a woman; and then the policemen seized her and dragged her away. A very strange girl, people said (pg.143).

After the military coup, Eunice is released from jail and Max proclaimed a 'Hero of the Revolution'. Odili comments, in the final sentence of the novel, "I say you died a good death if your life had inspired someone to come forward and shoot your murderer in the chest – without asking to be paid" (pg.149).

Edna first attracts Odili by her beauty and innocence and he learns that she is to become Chief Nanga's second wife, as already mentioned. He learns that the Chief has already 'invested in her' from his friend. "'He sent her to Woman's Training College,' said Andrew. 'So he has been planning it for a few years at least. I feel sorry for her; that man has no conscience'" (pg.23). The proposed marriage is confirmed by Chief Nanga's wife, who reiterates the sentiments she had earlier expressed when Odili asks about the Chief's forthcoming trip to America.

"'When Edna comes she will go to those places,' she said. 'I am too old and too bush.'

'Who is Edna?'

'Don't you know about Edna, our new wife?'"

Once Odili has returned to the village of Anata he goes to visit Mrs. Nanga who is staying there with her children, in order to get information about Edna. This is the only section of the novel in which the situation of women is questioned. They speak of education and Mrs. Nanga comments wistfully.

'I passed the entrance to a secondary school but Eddy's father and his people kept at me to marry him, marry him, and then my own parents joined in; they said, what did a girl want with so much education? So I

foolishly agreed. I wasn't old enough to refuse. Edna is falling into the same trap. Imagine a girl straight from college not even being able to teach for even one year and look around. Anyway what is my share in it? Let her come quick-quick to enjoy Chief Nanga's money before it runs away.' she laughed bitterly (pg.38).

With his own interests at heart, Odili suggests that Mrs. Nanga should advise Edna but she refuses cynically.

No, my brother, I won't spoil anyone's good fortune. When Eddy married me I was not half her age.....let her come and eat Nanga's wealth....The food is cooked and the smell of the soup is around. Let nobody remember the woman who toiled and starved when there was no money (pg.88).

Odili offers to go himself. He visits Edna's home more out of his own interest than Mrs. Nanga's. There he sees Edna again.

She wore a loose blouse over her lappa and an old silken head tie. As she emerged into the front room all my composure seemed to leave me. Instead of holding out my hand still seated as befitted a man.... I sprang to my feet like a woman-fearing Englishman.(pg.90)

He sees her in a different light to previously.

Perhaps it was the way she was dressed and the domestic responsibility she was exercising, or perhaps she had simply grown a little more since October; whatever the reason she was now a beautiful young woman and not a girl looking as though she was waiting to be taken back to her convent." (pg.91)

Some time later he eventually attempts to advise Edna, "You will be making a big and serious mistake if you allow anyone to rush you into marriage now" (pg.98). and thereafter he takes every opportunity to see her. He antagonizes her father, who is avariciously set on the marriage and Edna is shown to accept the inevitable, saying resignedly, "That is the world of women" (pg. 98). She rejects Odili's advances. She is totally controlled by her father and 'used' by him to improve his own wealth and position. Although she seems to be attracted to Odili, she fails to oppose the plans for her marriage.

In comparing Edna and Eunice, Odili expresses a preference for a less well educated woman however when Edna rejects his advances he writes a vicious little letter criticising her lack of education. Fortunately, for the resolution of the plot, Edna does not receive the letter so, after Chief Nanga is deposed by the military coup, Odili's family is able to carry out successful marriage negotiations with her father.

Although the novel deals mainly with 'educated' women, other women such as Odili's father's wives and Edna's mother are mentioned. They are given no voice, receive little or no characterization and are generally spoken of disparagingly. As a narrator, Odili falls short of his own vision of himself as 'moral and progressive' and as a writer, Achebe does nothing to enhance the status of women in independent Nigeria.

## **THE BEAUTYFUL ONES ARE NOT YET BORN**

A novel by Ayi Kwei Armah (Ghanain) First published 1968

Edition used 1996, East African Educational Publishers Ltd. Kenya

Set in post independence Ghana leading up to, and immediately after, the military coup that deposed Kwame Nkrumah, the novel is an indictment of the corruption that has penetrated Ghanaian society.

The main character is called only 'the man', however he is not an Everyman figure. He questions the corruption and loss of moral integrity that he sees all around him and will not submit to its influence but receives only scorn for not profiting from the status quo. He is disillusioned by the dissipation of the socialist dream, briefly hopes for a change with the advent of the coup and finally accepts that he cannot relate to his own society or be fulfilled within it. The main female character is the wife of the man, Oyo. She is set in opposition to his moral uprightness and questions his refusal to make life easier for the family by accepting bribes. They have become emotionally estranged. Early in the novel we learn:

There was nothing the man could say to his wife, and the woman herself did not look as if she thought there could be anything said to her about what she knew was so true. But inside the man the confusion and the impotence had swollen into something asking for a way out of confinement, and in his restlessness he rose and went out very quietly through the door, and his wife sat there not even staring after him, not even asking where he was going or when he would come back in the night, or even if he wanted to return at all to this home (pg.47).

As the story continues this estrangement deepens and the man can only find solace with a man friend, "the terrible feeling of loneliness again came over him in his own home, and he walked out with a desperation that was no less deep for all its suddenness, groping through the night for the only human hand that could touch his and not make him feel a stranger to life" (pg.151).

There is no real characterization of Oyo and the deprivation leading to her resentment is only touched on. The couple have three children whose characters are not developed in the novel despite the fact that the family's welfare is at the root of the couple's difficulties. Oyo is shown to be inordinately impressed by material things and prepared to cooperate with a minister of the government, who is connected to the family, in a corrupt deal.

After the military coup, when the family assist the fleeing minister, Oyo has a change of heart.

He went back into the hall and stood quietly beside Oyo. She held his hand in a tight grasp, then, in a voice that sounded as if she were stifling, she whispered, 'I'm glad you never became like him.'

In Oyo's eyes there was now real gratitude. Perhaps for the first time in their married life the man could believe that she was glad to have him the way he was (pg.165).

Other women featured in the novel are peripheral to the action and are almost all shown in a poor light. For example, when the minister, Koomson, is first introduced he has stopped to buy bread. After his buying from one seller, another tries to persuade him to buy more from her by flattering his ego:

The suit stops in front of the seller and the voice which comes out of it is playful, patronizing.

'Mammy, I can't eat all that.'

'So buy for your wife,' the seller sings back.

'She has enough.'

'Your girl friends, young beautiful girls, no?'

'I have no girl friends.'

'Ho, my white man, don't make me laugh. Have you ever seen a big man without girls? Even the old ones,' the seller laughs, 'even the old men' (pg. 37).

Some chapters of the novel are narrated in the third person and relate the events of the story while others are narrated in the first person, presumably by 'the man', and are more reflective and philosophical.

During one of the reflective passages of the novel, 'the man' recalls a friend who became a devotee of Rama Krishna and the prophet Gibran and recalls aspects of his

life, "Near the end he had discovered the one way: he would not corrupt himself by touching any woman, but save his semen to rejuvenate his brain by standing on his head a certain number of minutes every night and every dawn" ( pg. 48).

Later he reflects on the experience of men called to fight in alien lands during the Second World War and describes the betrayal of their women.

What will a man ever do when he is called to show his manhood fighting in alien lands and leaving his women behind with the demented and the old and the other women? What will a man ever do but think his women will remain his even though he is no longer there with them? And what will a woman do for absent men who send back money not to be spent but to be kept for unknown times when they hope to return, if return they ever will? What new thing is money if it is not to be spent? So there were men who, against the human wishes of some women they had married in their youth, did not die in foreign lands but came back boldly, like drunken thieves in blazing afternoons and cold nights, knowing even before they had drunk the water with the lying smile of welcome that they had been betrayed. Their anger came out in the blood of those closest to themselves, these men who had gone without anger to fight enemies they did not even know; they found anger and murder waiting for them, lying in the bosoms of the women they had left behind. All that the young eye could see then was the truth; that the land had become a place messy with destroyed souls and lost bodies looking for something that could take their pain and finding nothing but those very people whose pain should have been their pain, and for whose protection they should have learned to fight, if there had been any reason left anywhere ( pg. 64).

There is no suggestion that many women might not fit into the behaviour pattern he describes. Other descriptions of female characters, some examples of which follow, portray similar negative images.

One woman who is shown to act independently and to influence others is Maanan. The man says, "We followed Maanan as if she had been our mother, Kofi Billy and myself" (pg. 70). However, she is teaching them to smoke 'wee', an hallucinatory plant, the ultimate result of which is the suicide of Kofi Billy and Maanan's own destruction.

In his dream, detailed in chapter 8, the man sees himself walking happily with a female companion on the way to the Atlantic-Caprice (a night spot). Suddenly he is blinded by the lights of a car that is the first in a procession of gleaming cars, reminding him of 'OAU men in American vehicles'. His companion, however, is not blinded. "Floating upward in the air (she) lands inside the car in the lead.....Every shining thing goes out when only the man is left and the darkness turns keenly cold."

During his lunch break the man goes to eat in the street and listens to the conversation of other workers. The talk is of those who have 'done well', especially in the political arena, and of their material possessions. Coupled with this is their access to 'girls'. "Ei, and girls! Running to fill his cars.....Girls, girls. Fresh little ones still going to Achimoto and Holy Child.... He is cracking them like tiger nuts" (pg. 110).

Oyo's mother is portrayed negatively as a stereotypical Mother-in-law. She expresses her dissatisfaction with the man at every available opportunity. When he takes the children to stay with her while he and Oyo prepare for the visit of Koomson, she notices that her grandson's foot is bleeding and responds, "You have no shoes to wear so your poor little feet get torn to pieces. Ei, my husband, you have nobody, nobody to buy you shoes, so your little toes will all be destroyed." .....

"You must know you are nobody, you are an orphan, a complete orphan. You mustn't run around, like people who have men behind them, to buy them shoes" (pg.123). And when he attempts to pass on Oyo's message, the old woman cuts him short with, "Ah yes, the suffering daughter of mine, what does she say?"

The event of Koomson's visit gives the reader the second contact with his wife, Estella. She is shown to be completely fatuous. Her handshake is limp and brief and she makes it clear that she is used to a finer environment. She complains about the local beer, displays her jewellery and her wig and preens herself constantly. While her husband pretends loyalty and commitment to socialism, she is openly critical. "A long sigh arose from Estella. 'It's this foolish socialism that will spoil everyone's peace,'" (pg.135). Although Koomson is a pompous fool, he does not openly question the party line. Estella lacks even this subtlety.

The novel questions the values and workings of Ghanaian society and uses the man as an incorruptible foil to that society who, inevitably, will be disappointed and frustrated. Contributing to this disillusionment are the women with whom he has contact. They are shown in a negative and corrupting light, lacking the moral uprightness and loyalty of men, devoid of any real understanding of political or humanitarian issues, easily influenced and wooed by wealth and position and prepared to prostitute themselves for it.

## A GRAIN OF WHEAT

A novel by Ngugi Wa Thiong'o (Kenyan) First published 1967

Edition used 1995 East African Educational Publishers Ltd. Nairobi

Of this novel Ngugi wrote, "Although set in contemporary Kenya, all the characters in this book are fictitious.....But the situations and the problems are painfully real for the peasants who fought the British yet who now see all they fought for being put on one side." The novel, then, reiterates themes encountered in his other works on the A level syllabus. The time is immediately prior to, and after, Independence celebrations; the setting, rural Kenya. However, past events before and during the struggle are recounted by the characters.

In the villager's search for a suitable speaker to represent and inspire them at their celebrations, they focus on Mugo who later exposes himself as the traitor who had betrayed Kihika and caused his death. Kihika, the driving force behind the Mau Mau resistance in the area, is a major character in the novel in terms of its plot and symbolism.

A central character is the young woman Mumbi, Kihika's sister. Less of a symbol than some of Ngugi's other female characters, her characterization is subtle and sensitive (Nama 1986). Ngugi shows himself to be aware of, and prepared to address, the trials and disadvantages she faces, due to her gender, within rural Kenyan society. It seems valuable to explore her character and story briefly. One of a family of three children, she is the only one not to have received an education. Her older brother's education, begun in school and continued by himself, led to his political awareness, involvement with Mau Mau and eventual death. Her younger brother is studying at university. The reader learns that her own literacy has been achieved through them, "She got a piece of paper (she had been taught by her brothers to read and write) and scribbled....." (pg. 158). Her relationship with her brothers is strong and positive. She likes and respects Kihika and leans on him and she is warm and self-sacrificing in her affection for her young brother Kariuki. When introduced in the novel, she is described as "the most beautiful girl of the ridge" (pg. 66). She is subject to the normal dreams and yearnings of youth, is much admired by a number of young men and, "enjoyed the admiration she excited in men's eyes" (pg. 67). It is, then, rather surprising that she agrees to marry

Gikonyo, the carpenter, in preference to his rival Karanja and other young men. She does have a vision of herself, perhaps inspired by her brother Kihika, fighting in the bush beside her man.

In the lead up to the hostilities and the detention of the black Kenyan leaders, young black Kenyan men discuss politics and philosophical issues but significantly when the young women appear the conversation turns to lighter things. Kihika has a dream of fighting with his lover, Wambuku, at his side. When she pleads with him. "You'll not leave me alone," he replies. "Never!" (pg. 85). However they possess different dreams and their relationship is based on delusion.

Mumbi and Gikonyo begin a happy life together and develop an intimate and interdependent relationship, which is interrupted by the detention of Gikonyo. Disillusioned in their hope for early Independence, Gikonyo clings to Mumbi and his mother Wangari as the only unchanging reality in his life throughout his six years in detention while the two women have to continue the daily struggle to survive without a breadwinner and in an increasingly hostile environment. Mumbi undergoes many humiliating experiences in her efforts to support her mother-in-law and her own shattered parents and younger brother. Gikonyo returns to the pain and horror of finding Mumbi has born Karanja's child, and, without ever mentioning the child or discussing the situation with Mumbi, he embarks on a loveless and punishing life with her.

Mumbi shares the dreams she had as a younger woman with Mugo.

I dreamt of sacrifice to save so many people. And although sometimes I feared, I wanted those days to come. Even when I got married, the dream did not die. I longed to make my husband happy, yes, but I also prepared myself to stand by him when the time came. I could carry his sheath and as fast as he shot into the enemy, I would feed him with arrows. If danger came and he fell he would fall straight into my arms and I would bring him home safely to myself (pg.120).

As their conversation continues the reader learns a little of her life during Gikonyo's absence. She describes how when the villagers were forced to leave their homes and move into a new area she and her mother-in-law had not completed building a new hut in the allotted time. Nevertheless their old huts, which had been built by Wangari after her husband had divorced her and she had come to this village with her child, are burned down by the soldiers. They are forced to spend cold nights in their uncompleted hut. At this time Mumbi took on the responsibilities of a man, "...she tied a belt around

her waist and took on a man's work." (pg.123). She cultivates what land they have, works as an itinerant agricultural labourer, and at times, in order to feed her own family and her mother-in-law, she is forced to accept help from Karanja. After the old chief of the village, who has collaborated with the colonial administration, is shot by Freedom Fighters, Karanja is made chief and the collaboration continues. He is now in a position of power and attempts to influence Mumbi, who, however, attacks him verbally. "Why don't you wear your mother's skirt and Mwengu? When others went to fight, you remained behind to lick the feet of your white husbands" (pg. 130). Karanja continues persuasively then taunts her until finally she begs to be left alone. There comes a time when, to help her brother to continue his education, it is necessary for her to seek Karanja's help. This is given readily and she says, "I felt ashamed of my sharp words to Karanja" (pg.130). He eventually tantalizes her with promises of her husband's return, and "full of submissive gratitude," she allows him to "make love to her" (pg.131/2).

Gikonyo flourishes in business and builds a new house on his return but he is frustrated by the corruption of the new M.P. and his inability to make progress as he would wish. His disappointment with his own life and his lack of compassion leads to the tension between he and Mumbi finally erupting when he returns home in a bad mood. Mumbi gives him food, which he refuses to eat.

'What is the trouble' she asked with submissive concern.

'Since when did I start discussing my affairs with you?' he answered. She withdrew, ashamed (pg. 145).

Eventually Gikonyo mistreats Mumbi's child and when she defends the child he strikes her. She threatens to leave. In deciding that she will not accept his behaviour any longer, she is supported by her mother-in-law, Wangari. Arriving home in an aggressive and frustrated mood again Gikonyo finds that Mumbi and the child have gone to live with her parents.

"Let her never come back,' he shouted, glaring at his mother,....." but she supports Mumbi, "You. You. If today you were a baby crawling on your knees and eating mud and dust, I would pinch your thighs so hard you would learn. But you are a man, now. Read your own heart, and know yourself." she says (pg. 154).

Mumbi is not welcomed by her parents. Her mother, Wanjiku, who ridicules her situation, tells her:

“The women of today surprise me. They cannot take a slap, soft as a feather, .....from a man. In our time a woman could take blow and blow from her husband without a thought of running back to her parents” (pg. 157/8).

Mumbi still dreams of achieving something; of being needed, and she responds positively when asked to help persuade Mugo to speak at the celebrations. She sees it as a way of showing herself to have value despite Gikonyo’s assessment of her.

The celebrations include a running race in which Gikonyo finds himself pitted against, among others, Karanja, his old rival and the father of Mumbi’s child. Gikonyo falls and is injured and Mumbi rushes to his aid. Finding he has only broken his arm, and remembering their estrangement, she leaves him, however she visits him in hospital where he ignores her. When asked, “How is he?” by her mother, she replies, “I will not visit him again..... Not even if I hear he is dying” (pg. 201). She does visit him again with Wangari and when he hears of Mugu’s confession, he appears to question his own heart and self righteous attitude and, over the time he is in hospital, he makes tenuous moves to repair his relationship with Mumbi. The reader is left with the impression that reconciliation will occur but on her terms.

As already seen, Mumbi’s mother has very traditional views and attitudes... She is reluctant to support her daughter in taking a stand against her husband’s ill treatment. In contrast to this is the strong bond formed between Mumbi and her mother-in-law, Wangari. Wangari has been rejected by her husband and Gikonyo is her only child. After Gikonyo married Mumbi, “Wangari...was also happy. She had found a daughter in Mumbi, with whom,.....she could share a women’s joys and troubles.....The soul of the mother warmed towards the young woman crossing the abyss of silence no words could ever reach.....” (pg. 86).

During Gikonyo’s detention Mother and daughter-in-law support each other through their difficult life. Wangari accepts Mumbi’s child and is critical of Gikonyo’s attitude on his return. She intervenes in their argument and threatens Gikonyo, “Touch her again if you call yourself a man!” (pg.146).

Another important female character is Wambui who has won great respect through her activities during the war. “During the Emergency, she carried secrets from the villages to the forest and back to the villages and towns” (pg.19). She knew the underground

movement both in and outside the Rift Valley. She now plays a prominent role in the community and, “her fighting spirit had never died.....” (pg.157).

Ngugi shows an understanding of the constrictive situation of Majery Thompson, wife of the Administrative Secretary, John Thompson. Locked into particular attitudes and behaviour by her upbringing and society, and out of her husband’s working life, she feels frustrated and unfulfilled. She wants to communicate on a meaningful level with her husband but is no longer able to. She seeks solace in another man’s arms but finds this equally unsatisfying. Her garden and domestic chores are not enough. “She was restless, like a person who misses something without knowing, in particular what he has lost” (pg.46).

‘A Grain of Wheat’ is a tragic novel which shows the hope, betrayal and suffering of its time. In it Ngugi reveals his deep insight into human behaviour and draws the reader’s attention to women’s value and the lack of any real appreciation of that value within the society of which he writes.

### **THE TRIAL OF DEDAN KIMATHI**

A Play by Ngugi Wa Thiong’o and Micere Githao Mugo (Kenyan) First published 1976  
Edition used 1997 East African Educational Publishers Kenya

This play, which is dedicated to the memory of Dedan Kimathi and all of Kenya’s revolutionary heroes, is set during the time of the Mau Mau uprising, not long before independence negotiations began, although there is movement back in time and a general flexibility of time, place and movement.

During the course of the action Dedan Kimathi is shown being tried by a colonial court of law and also undergoing an enactment of the psychological trials to which Kenyan freedom fighters were subjected. A flashback scene, in the bush, also shows him in the role of judge ‘trying’ two British soldiers and an African of the KAR and, later, four guerrilla fighters who are known to have negotiated with the enemy.

Dedan Kimathi, who refuses to ‘plead’, is found guilty of possessing a firearm by the colonial court and sentenced to death.

The play has a cast of 40 or more, only three of which are female. The female characters are:-

- The old white dame, who speaks only once to intervene in the violent actions of a fellow white settler in the first court scene. Her statement aligns her with the anti-African attitude of the court and the colonial government.
- 'The Girl' is an ex street child who is portrayed as tough and strong, able to defend herself against 'The Boy', who she has cheated, and to rise above the oppression and degradation of her life. She initiates action and shows bravery when called upon to contribute to the struggle. The boy admits his fear and says of her...

Boy: I was (afraid) .....but the girl here.....She was all strength and daring and no fear (pg.60).

Unnamed, she symbolizes the youth involvement in the struggle.

- 'The Woman', also not given a name, to a large extent is the representative of woman kind. When she addresses the boy and girl she stands for all the committed Mothers talking to their children. She is very philosophical and in several speeches deals with the thematic material of the play. She replies to the boy's speech, above...

Woman: (proud) That is the way it should always be. Instead of fighting against one another, we who struggle against exploitation and oppression, should give one another strength and faith till victory is ours (pg.60).

She is able to inspire the girl and boy to assist her in an attempt to rescue Kimathi from the police cells.

Woman: (thoughtfully) Listen. Kimathi is a genius in this struggle. It's therefore important to rescue him even at the cost of a few lives. The struggle must continue (pg.61).

She has fought in the forest with Kimathi and the other guerrillas and Kimathi says of her...

Kimathi: (pointing at the woman. Talks contemplatively as if agitated within)

Do you see this woman?  
How many tasks has she performed  
Without complaint  
Between here and the villages?  
How many people has she  
snatched from jails, from colonial  
Jaws of death!

How many brave warriors has she  
 recruited at great risks!  
 Walking for miles  
 Hardly getting sleep  
 for days.  
 When this struggle is over  
 We shall erect at all the city corners  
 Monuments  
 To our women  
 Their courage and dedication  
 To our struggle  
 Come forward, mother of people  
 Teach us a lesson on  
 Diligence and commitment  
 What do you say about  
 These slumberers?  
 These surrenders of our freedom? (pg.76)

Even in this scene, when other significant male freedom fighters are named she remains 'the woman'.

The lack of female characters suggests that women and girls are not relevant to the actions of this play and are, for the most part, peripheral to the revolution. The girl and the woman, however, are both portrayed in a very positive light as strong resilient people capable of initiating action and taking risks. Never the less, development of the woman's character is very limited. She is, in fact, an archetype, required to represent 'women of the revolution' and as such could have limited value as a role model.

## **PETALS OF BLOOD**

A novel by Ngugi wa Thiong'o First published 1977

Edition used 1995 East African Educational Publishers Ltd. Kenya

This is a complex novel that deals with similar thematic material to Ngugi's play 'The Trail of Dedan Kimathi' and his novel 'A Grain of Wheat', but reaches beyond these in complexity and depth. As with the works of Chinua Achebe, most students will have been introduced to Ngugi's writing, in this case, through reading the novel 'The River Between,' in their foundation Literature course at GCSE level. Whereas 'The River

Between' deals with the break down of, and interruption to, traditional Kikuyu society, with the onset of colonialism, 'Petals of Blood' portrays the product of this – a materialistic and ruthless modern Kenya. "This world...this Kenya...this Africa knows only one law. You eat somebody or you are eaten" (pg 291). As in other of Ngugi's novels and his play 'The Trial of Dedan Kimathi,' there are strong influential women portrayed in 'Petals of Blood'. Ngugi's writing shows sensitivity to the burdens which women have to bear. He places a number of his female characters in a position of struggle and resistance first in colonial, and later, in post colonial Kenya.

The geographic proximity of the setting of the novel and its use of Swahili words and phrases accentuate its relevance and possible appeal to Tanzanian students.

Set in Ilmorog, originally a small, off-the-beaten track, drought ridden village which is later 'developed', the novel deals with the stories and interlocked fate of four major characters; Wanja, Munira, Abdulla and Karega, and takes place over a period of twelve years some time after Kenya gained its independence. It begins with the murder of three prominent Ilmorog businessmen and then traces the events, backwards and forwards in time, which have led to this occurrence.

Wanja, who arrives in Ilmorog from a life as a 'bar girl' in the city to spend time with her grandmother, Nyakinyua and to attempt to begin a new life, reflects Ngugi's socialist ideology. She challenges the status quo, organises the women into a cooperative method of production to improve profitability and at the time of the drought, plays a catalytic role in the mobilization of the villagers politically and economically.

One of the first people to meet Wanja on her arrival in Ilmorog is Munira, the local schoolmaster. Attempting to lead a life of quiet and serenity, he is disturbed by her arrival and its effect on him, "...hell is woman.....heaven is woman" (pg. 25), he muses. In Abdulla's bar he and Abdulla learn a little of her childhood when she tells them, "I often wrestled with the boys. I also did some drills only done by boys.....I would tuck in my skirt and hold it tight between my legs. I also climbed up trees" (pg. 25).

To the amazement of the villagers, Wanja stays in Ilmorog and, through her conversations with Abdulla and Munira, the reader gradually learns something of her history and the influences that have shaped her life.

Although still young, she has become cynical of life and particularly in her attitude to men. She recognises her power over them, “She was somehow sure of her power over men: she knew how they could be very weak before her body” (pg. 56). But, in the long run, she mourns her inability to find fulfilment and to bear a child. Later, after her return to prostitution, she describes the vulnerability of women. “That’s how one night I fully realised this law. Eat or you are eaten. If you have a cunt – excuse my language, but it seems the curse on Adam’s Eve on those who are born with it.....you are doomed to either marrying someone or being a whore” (pg. 293). Unlike Abdulla and Munira, she refuses to accept or to hide within the conditions of the village. After the poor harvest she challenges their philosophical acceptance of it. “Haven’t you seen the flies on mucus filled noses? A cowhide or grass for a bed? Huts with falling in thatches?” (pg 75).

When the young man, Karega, arrives in the village he is accepted into the circle of Wanja, Munira and Abdulla. His past is inextricably bound with that of Munira and Abdulla and eventually he and Wanja form a binding relationship. He also challenges the acceptance of neo-colonialism. He works as an untrained teacher with Munira who eventually has him removed from the position, in part for his challenges to the non-political curriculum content, but more particularly out of jealousy of his relationship with Wanja.

The development of the school and the importance of education in this rural area is an important theme of the novel. Wanja assists Abdulla to get his business onto a more profitable basis partly so that he will be able to send his ‘brother’, Joseph, to school. The growth of the school is described.

The school was now divided into four sections, Standards 1 to 4....For Standard 4, which contained bigger and brighter boys who had been taught off and on by teachers who never stayed long, Karega arranged extra classes after five to make up for lost time. (pg. 109).

It is interesting to note that the only students mentioned are boys. The feelings of girls, who may also have wished to attend school, are not mentioned or explored.

During the period of Ilmorog’s rapid development and growth, Wanja is one of the few local people who takes advantage of the commercial opportunities and this enables her to give other people work. It is through her efforts to retain her grandmother’s land, and

the financial cost of this, that she loses her power and independence and is forced to return to prostitution.

Wanja's deep desire for motherhood is not fulfilled, however several other 'mothers' appear in the novel. Nyakinyua, Wanja's grandmother, plays a major role. She represents a tradition of strong women inextricably linked to the land and to the traditional way of life. Always strong, in widowhood she develops an independence of thought, behaviour and political awareness, which is demonstrated, particularly when the villagers march to Nairobi. She is the repository of the village 'lore' and, as a storyteller, attempts to pass this on. She provides a refuge and a base for Wanja's rejuvenation.

In contrast to Nyakinyua are Munira's wife and mother. Munira is somewhat at odds with his own Christian, educated family. His choice of Wanjiku for a wife is a symbol of his resistance and yearning for a more traditional and sensuous way of life. He first sees her at a circumcision ceremony.

Her voice, her dancing, her total involvement had attracted him and he decided that here at last was what would bring fulfilment to his life. But she had become Julia and the temporary dream of an escape into sensuality had vanished on the marriage bed (pg 203).

Julia becomes an image of his mother and Munira develops his own life away from her and his children.

Karega's mother is another 'woman alone'. Rejected by her husband, she becomes an itinerant agricultural worker, and although she leads a difficult life, she is able to resist the 'patronage' of landowners and retain her independence and integrity.

Although Wanja's character is more profoundly developed than that of 'the woman' in 'The Trail of Dedan Kimathi', she has, also, a symbolic quality. Seduced, oppressed and rejected as a young girl, she resorts to 'going with the flow' and a good time life in the city where she murders her newborn child and then finds she cannot have another one. This loss of her child is both symbolic of her lack of control over her life and a powerful influence on her later life and her relationships with men. She leaves the city life to stay with her grandmother in the poor village of Ilmorog. Here she works in the fields organising the women to improve productivity by cooperative work methods and assists Abdulla to get his business onto a more profitable basis and to send his 'son' Joseph to

school. Her political mobilisation of the villagers, to go to the city and request help from their MP, at the time of drought, is initially successful but leads to the 'take over' and 'development' of the village as a business centre, the loss of land and small businesses for the local people and Wanja's return to a life of prostitution in order to survive. Less of an archetype than 'the woman', she appears, however, to be a symbol for Kenya itself.

## THE LION AND THE JEWEL

A play by Wole Soyinka (Nigerian) 1963

Edition used 1974 Zimbabwe Publishing House (Pvt.) Ltd.

This play is set in the village of Ilunjile, Nigeria, and its title already conjures up quite vivid images. It concerns a love triangle in which Sidi, the village jewel, appears to exist, in terms of the play and her society, in order to be pursued by two men – the sixty year old, powerful Bale of the village, the Lion, and Lakunle, the westernised school teacher.

At a time prior to the action of the play a photographer from Lagos has visited the village and taken photographs which, in particular, celebrate Sidi's beauty. He has returned with a glossy magazine featuring these 'images' which have given Sidi a new awareness of herself and her power. The audience can have hope for her taking control of her life.

Lakunle claims to have a modern view of marriage. He is in love with Sidi but says –

I want to wed  
Because I love,  
I seek a life companion....  
An equal partner in my race of life. (pg.8)

Despite this lip service to equality, he criticises her,

...you are as stubborn  
As an illiterate goat...(pg.2)

tries to teach her how to behave,

How often must I tell you, Sidi, that  
A grown-up girl must cover up her...(pg.2)

undermines her self esteem,

For as a woman you have a smaller brain  
 Than mine.....  
 The scientists have proved it...  
 Women have smaller brains than men  
 That's why they are called the weaker sex. (pg.4)

and boasts of his worldliness,

What I boast is known in Lagos, that city  
 Of magic...(pg.5).

However, Sidi stands up to him saying -

Well go there. Go to these places where  
 Women would understand you  
 If you told them of your plans with which  
 You oppress me daily...(pg.5)

Lakunle patronises her -

Sidi, my love will open your mind  
 Like the chaste leaf in the morning when  
 The sun first touches it...(pg.6)

but refuses to pay her bride price which he sees as -

A savage custom, barbaric, out dated,  
 Rejected, denounced, accursed...(pg.7).

He paints a picture of their future life together in which they ape western ways and he 'makes her over' in accordance with Lagos standards of beauty:

High heeled shoes for the lady, red paint  
 On her lips. And her hair stretched  
 Like a magazine photo (pg.9).

(The irony of his aim is clear when the photographer returns to the village.)

Sidi rejects Lakunle's verbosity and accuses him of meanness.

The arrival of the photographer and the magazine is announced by other girls of the village who have seen the magazine which is now with the Bale. One of the girls tells her:

Oh, Sidi, he was right. You are beautiful. On the cover of the book is an image of you.....And in the middle leaves, from the beginning of one leaf to the end of another is another one of you from head to toe (pg.11).

The Bale's image is also in the magazine but it is "in a little corner."

Sidi can not help but be impressed.

If that is true then I am more esteemed  
Than Bale Baroka...(pg.11)

When Lakunle ventures an opinion she questions whether she will marry him.

Known as I am to the whole wide world,  
I would demean my worth to wed  
A mere village school teacher (pg.12).

Later Sidi is approached by Sadiku, the oldest wife of the Bale, who reports that the Bale wants Sidi to be his latest wife. Lakunle objects;

Listen not to the voice of this infidel...(pg.20)

but Sidi dismisses him,

The stranger took my beauty  
And placed it in my hands...  
Loveliness beyond the jewels of a throne  
That is what he said (pg.20).

and she questions Sadiku.

Why did Baroka not request my hand  
Before the stranger  
Brought his book of images?....  
He seeks to have me as his property  
Where I must fade beneath his jealous hold...  
He seeks new fame  
As the one who has possessed  
The jewel of Ilujinle! (pg.21).

As a last resort, Sadiku issues an invitation for Sidi to attend a little supper in her honour but is told:

Tell your Lord that Sidi does not sup with  
Married men (pg.23).

Briefly, it seems that Sidi will reject both, the two men who wish to possess her, and the Soyinka stereotype of the exceptionally beautiful, submissive virgin (Bryan 1987).

The Bale begins a rumour that he has lost his virility. His 'loyal' wife, Sadiku turns against him in celebrating and spreading the rumour to Sidi. They join in rejoicing over their symbolic victory over male oppression.

Take warning my masters  
We'll scotch you in the end (pg.33).

Sadiku says, and Sidi joins her in a victory dance, saying-

I suddenly am glad to be a woman.  
We won! We won! Hurray for womankind! (pg.33).

The victory is short lived.

Sidi decides to attend Baroka's supper in order to;

...see him thwarted, to watch his longing,  
His twitching hands which this time cannot  
Rush to his trouser cords (pg.35).

However, despite her attempts at cynicism, she is no match for the wily Lion. He overcomes her with his seeming lack of interest, his display of his physical prowess, his scheme to produce postage stamps using her image and his inventive and poetic use of language, until she is reduced to submissiveness. He tells her;

A girl like you must inherit  
Miracles which age alone reveals.  
Is not that so? (pg.54)

and she replies:

Everything you say Bale  
Seems wise to me (pg.54).

Sidi returns very late to Sadiku and Lakunle and admits she is no longer 'a maid'. Lakunle is shocked,

The Lord forbid! (pg.59)

he exclaims, but Sadiku's reply is pragmatic.

Too late for prayers. Cheer up. It happens to the best of us (pg.59).

Momentarily, Lakunle wants to be struck dead but he quickly recovers and vows that he will still marry Sidi. He is swift to note that his philosophical stance against the paying of bride price will now be backed by practicalities.

But you will agree, it is only fair  
That we forget the bride price totally  
Since you no longer can be called a maid (pg.60).

Sidi rushes off to prepare for her wedding whereupon Lakunle falls back on his own set of traditional requirements and procrastinates-

A man must have time to prepare...(pg.62).

However he need not worry for it is not by him that Sidi will be married;

...did you think that after him,  
I could endure the touch of another man?  
I who have felt the strength,  
The perpetual youthful zest  
Of the panther of the trees? pg.63)

she asks. Then, 'done up in a richly embroidered cloth....radiant' (stage directions pg.62), handing the magazine to Lakunle, and receiving Sadiku's blessing, the Jewel goes to meet the Lion.

Despite the early glimmering of hope that Sidi might 'use' her new image and the esteem in which she is held to control and develop her own life, the play quickly shows that any victory over male oppression by women is short lived, that the only real option is marriage and that the most desirable option is to marry someone rich and powerful. (Davies 1979)

## GOD'S BITS OF WOOD

A novel by Sembene Ousmane (Senegalese) Translated by Francis Price, 1962

Edition used 1984 Zimbabwe Publishing House

As a Marxist, Ousmane accepts that Senegal must go through the classic stages of development to become an ideal Socialist state. This novel tells the story of the Senegalese struggle for unionisation along the Dakar-Niger railroad line and for ultimate independence from French rule. It describes the birth of the labour movement in colonial Senegal in the 1940s with women playing important roles in the transformation of their society.

Sembene's style, and the content of his novel, expose the harsh realities of this society including the subordination of women and their limited opportunities within it. Unlike many other male writers on the course, he challenges the situation of women and portrays them as the neglected force which can shift the whole society into the future. In 'God's Bits of Wood' the female characters occupy significant roles. They are real, palpable individuals, many of whom show strong leadership qualities and great strength and even question their own definition of self thus achieving emotional and political growth within the context of their society and the novel.

The protagonist of the novel, Ibrahim Bakayoko, a leader of the strike action precipitated by the railway workers, is greatly admired by, and is an inspiration to, the other workers. He is the spokesperson for Ousmane's socialism and seems, in the self-sufficiency and solitariness required for this role, to be contrasted to many of the other characters, especially the women, "Certainly he was one of them, he was fighting for them and with them and yet sometimes he felt himself far from them, very far away and lonely" (pg. 190). After he has refused her offer of love and marriage, N'Deye Touti says of him, "He has no heart, and he wants everyone to be like him – inhuman!" (pg. 223).

The novel focuses on 'the strike' and the setting moves from city to city where the strike action is taking place. There are a huge number of significant characters linked together by the strike and its ramifications. Of these characters, many are women whose life experiences and attitudes differ greatly.

The opening chapter gives the reader a picture of Bakayoko's home although his political activities mean he is there infrequently. With the exception of Fa Keita, the patriarch, it

is a household of women. It is a traditional household dominated by Bakayoko's old mother, Niakoro, and by the dictates of the Muslim faith. Niakoro has no sympathy for the strike, having lost a husband and a son in a former strike. She frets about the behaviour of the other women, the supposed insolence of her granddaughter, the relentless changes to society and the absence of her son – in short, her loss of control. Bakayoko's traditional Muslim wife, Assitan, offers him unquestioning devotion. Described in some detail, she seems to be Ousmane's representation of this type of woman and a foil for Bakayoko who has inherited her from his dead brother.

By the ancient standards of Africa, Assitan was a perfect wife: docile, submissive, and hard-working, she never spoke one word louder than another. She knew nothing whatever of her husband's activities or, if she did, she gave no appearance of knowing (pg. 106).

The reader learns how she was married to the older Bakayoko without her consent and had borne him a daughter. After his death, "once again the old customs had taken control of her life" (pg. 106) and she had been married to Ibrahim.

She was as submissive to Ibrahim as she had been to his brother. He might leave her for days at a time, he might even be absent for months, he faced dangers she knew nothing of, but that was his lot as a man, as the master. Her own lot as a woman was to accept things as they were and to remain silent, as she had been taught to do" (pg.106).

When appealed to by one of her husband's colleagues to take some action over the activities of the household, she says,

".....if my husband were here it would be different.....but I am only a woman, and no one listens to women, particularly now" (pg. 107).

A woman who does involve herself in the struggle is the market woman Dieynaba.

Dieynaba had set up her stand a little apart from the market proper.....Seated on her bench, her legs stretched out comfortably, she was smoking a long clay pipe and studying the crowd through half-closed eyes.....Dieynaba never solicited customers as the other women did, but simply waited for them to come to her, calmly puffing at her pipe..... (pg. 16).

When the strike action begins and the men demonstrate, they are charged by the military and a pitched battle takes place.

Dieynaba had rallied the women of the market place and like a band of Amazons they came to the rescue armed with clubs, with iron bars, and bottles (pg. 22).

She is a woman of action and instigates the positive actions of the apprentice boys to procure food for the hungry people. She expresses scant respect for men: “‘Men!’ Deiyndaba said, ‘Whenever you need them they are nowhere around’” (pg. 22). However she supports them in their efforts to gain their rights in the work place. She provides a catalyst for the wives of the striking men who meet first at her house as, first their money runs out, then food supplies dwindle and hunger sets in. She encourages them, “‘just by the strength of her presence’” (pg. 136). Deiyndaba has also provided a home for the young woman, Penda, daughter of her husband’s first wife, after her mother’s death, and accepted that, “‘From her earliest childhood she had demonstrated a resolute independence which only increased as she grew up’” (pg. 137).

This young woman, a prostitute, enjoys a freedom comparable to that of Bakayoko because she does not share the domestication of most women and lives outside the moral strictures of her society. (Lee 1979) After her death, Bakayoko reflects on the nature of the friendship he experienced with her and wonders what drew them to each other. “‘Could it have been the fact that she, like himself, was a traveller from one station to another?’” (pg. 226).

As the strike action continues and intensifies, the women’s solidarity and support increases. The men meet together with their employers and are supported by the demonstration of the women chanting in support of their men.

The morning light is in the east;  
It is daybreak of a day of history.  
You have lit the torch of hope  
And victory is near.

Penda is not intimidated when confronted by the soldiers while waiting with the other women for the delegates to leave a meeting with their employers.

‘We’ll wait here until they come out,’ Penda shouted.  
‘But they may be in there all afternoon,’ the sergeant of the militiamen said.  
‘We have been waiting for this day for months.’ Penda said. ‘We can wait an afternoon.’ Then she climbed up on a stone marker and gave a signal to start the singing (pg. 177).

The women’s decision to march to Dakar comes at a point where negotiations between the workers and their employers are at a stand still and it thus supports the men in their determination to continue the strike. Penda addresses the assembled men.

I speak in the name of all of the women, but I am just the voice they have chosen to tell you what they have decided to do. Yesterday we all laughed together, men and women, and today we weep together, but for us women this strike still means the possibility of a better life tomorrow. We owe it to ourselves to hold up our heads and not to give in now. So we have decided that tomorrow we will march together to Dakar (pg. 185).

The women prepare themselves in Deinyaba's compound and "there was a steady trampling of purposeful feet, like the sounds of a legion lifting camp" (pg. 187).

As she leads the women's protest march from Thies to Dakar, Penda uses a combination of sarcasm, irreverence and sympathy to encourage them but it is her personal reserve of strength which holds the women together and helps them to achieve their goal.

More and more often now, Penda left her own group and walked back along the length of the column, gathering in the stragglers, stopping to talk to the old and the feeble, encouraging them to go on (pg. 197).

On their arrival in Dakar the women are met by soldiers who bar their way. The order is given.

"Go back to Thies women! We cannot let you pass.'

'We will pass if we have to walk on the body of your mother!' Penda cried" (pg. 202)

In the resulting fracas shots are fired and Penda and one of the men who has been supporting the march, are killed. "But how could a handful of men in red taboos prevent this great river from rolling on to the sea?" (pg. 202) asks the author. Penda's death provides an inspiration to others and strengthens the solidarity of the women.

Their reception within Dakar is varied but the local women, who are already deeply involved themselves, greet them like warriors.

As they approached the grade crossing, Grandmother Fatou Wade pushed forward to meet them. She waved the cloth above her head and then spread it across the street in front of Mariame Sonko, who paused in astonishment.

'No, no!' the old woman cried. 'Come ahead, come ahead, and walk over the cloth. In the old times that is how the warriors were received when they returned to their homes! There were shouts of enthusiasm from the crowd, and the other women began to follow her example. In a few minutes the pavement was strewn with handkerchiefs, head cloths, and even blouses and the great multi-coloured carpet made the arrival of the women seem like a carnival' (pg. 210).

The march of the women of Thies symbolises the entire steady movement of the Senegalese people out of their colonised state and towards nationhood.

In Dakar the compound at N'Diayene is a focus of the action. Several of the men most active in the strike come from here and the women of the compound back their stand and action. Ramatoulaye is the matriarch and, since the beginning of the strike, her responsibilities had been huge because, in the household of which she is the eldest, "there were no less than twenty of God's bits of wood" (pg. 40). In her attempt to get food for the household, she appeals to her hypocritical brother, Mabigue, to arrange credit for her but he refuses and reveals his support for the colonial administration and his opposition to the strikers. Ramatoulaye divorces herself from any future contact with her brother and when his fat and cosseted ram ventures into her compound and eats food which has been put aside for the children, she takes it upon herself to kill the ram and cook it to feed the people of her compound. She justifies her action by saying, "I knew that God was with me and I knew that it is possible to die of hunger.....God knows this too.....being the head of a family is a heavy burden – too heavy for a woman. We must have help" (pg.69). However, she shows herself to be capable of bearing that burden saying,

When you know that the life and spirit of others depend on your life and your spirit, you have no right to be afraid – even when you are terribly afraid. In the cruel times we are living through we must find our own strength, somehow and force ourselves to be hard (pg.69).

Ramatoulaye's actions lead to recriminations from the police but, convinced of their justification, the women react with strength and aggression. On hearing that the police have been informed, Mame Sofi reacts positively saying, "if that's the case, let us get ready to receive them" (pg. 70), and she and the other women begin to fill empty bottles with sand. When the police arrive Ramatoulaye confronts them with defiance and hatred and the other women wonder from where she, who has always been quiet and unassuming, and has not had the experiences of men, has found this new strength. An authorial intrusion informs the reader, "The answer was as simple as the woman herself. It had been born beside a cold fireplace in an empty kitchen" (pg. 74). Ramatoulaye refuses to be intimidated by the police or to express any remorse for her actions that have led to a full-scale battle with the police.

Also of the N'Diayene compound is N'Deye Touti, who, to a certain extent, represents the young, educated women of her society, caught in the ambivalence of home and school, having a sense of duality and uncertain of their place and direction. She is described as, "a lovely girl of about twenty, in the full bloom of youth and health" (pg. 48). She is conscious of the impression she makes on the boys in the district but, "Before the strike she had gone to the teachers' training school, which gave her a considerable advantage over the boys" (pg. 57). Her education has become a barrier between her and her family.

She lived in a kind of separate world; the reading she did, the films she saw, made her a part of a universe in which her own people had no place, and by the same token she had no place in theirs" (pg. 57).

Her education is not fitting her to take a place in the independence movement of Senegal or of Africa as a whole.

N'Deye herself knew far more about Europe than she did about Africa.....she had never read a book by an African author – she was quite sure they could teach her nothing" (pg. 58).

The ridicule which her behaviour draws from other women in the compound makes her consider herself a prisoner in the place that should have been her home. She is loved by the good looking young man Beaugosse but is attracted to Bakayoko despite her rejection of polygamy. She is subject to day dreaming, dreaming of a love that will remove her from her present life to something more luxurious and pleasant. Her interaction with Bakayoko is important in directing her psychological development. After his rejection of her love, she mourns but then redirects her energy into productive activity.

Ad'jibid'ji is Bakayoko's adopted daughter and with her he shares a special relationship. She is an intelligent child who attends school, "her maturity, her quickness, and her intelligence astounded everyone..." (pg. 4) and despite her willingness to participate in household activities and the respect that she shows her grandmother, she comes in to conflict with Niakoro due to her knowledge of the outside world. She wishes to please but on occasions she feels unfairly treated.

The knowledge of her fault upset her, but even as she thought about it she wanted to cry out that she was free and independent. She wished she might explain that word- independence" (pg. 5).

Her father has concentrated on her education and, during his absences, corresponds with her on a weekly basis. The seed of equality has been planted in her mind, "Petit Pere says that men and women will be equal some day" (pg. 97). Ad'jibid'ji is presented as a prototype of the new woman, growing in political awareness, open to change and articulate.

During the trial of Diara, the strike breaker, the experiences and opinions of women are given freedom of expression and value.

Suddenly a woman's voice was heard. 'I would like to say...'  
 Several irritated voices called, 'Quiet!'  
 'Who spoke down there at the back?' Konate demanded.  
 'Its one of those silly women!' someone said.  
 'But I told the women to come.' Tiemoko said. 'They have important things to say. Come forward, Hadi Dia.' (pg. 91)

The strike and its associated activities offer new roles for women and lead to recognition by men of the women's strength and abilities. As it continues, the men become more and more dependent on the ingenuity of their wives to enable them to continue.

.....at the beginning they were scarcely conscious of the help the women gave them. But soon they began to understand that, here, too, the age to come would have a different countenance.....And seeing the burdened shoulders, the listless walk, the women became conscious that a change was coming for them as well (pg. 33).

The novel shows the labour movement to be part of a broad social phenomenon inexorably leading towards an independent nation which preserves the integrity and the culture of its indigenous peoples while liberating and respecting its women and men as equals.

#### Summary of set texts:

Despite my positive comments on the images of women in 'God's Bits of Wood' the question remains; is this literature helping to fulfil the goals of Tanzanian education, as laid down by the government and identified in my first paragraph, or the objectives of Secondary Education such as the development of personal identity, integrity and self confidence, recognition of human rights and the preparation of students for tertiary study and the world of work? Regrettably, I must say; no it is not. Almost all the literature reinforces the status quo for male students, presenting them with an extremely limited

challenge to this and few role models likely to encourage them to question the dictates of patriarchal society or to motivate any change in their acceptance of their 'given' role within it. Female students are even more poorly served acceptance of their 'given' role within it. Female students are even more poorly served by these book choices. They are subjected to the marginalisation of women from all the 'important' areas of life, their lack of personal expression and insignificance within society and an almost unquestioning acceptance of their role as second-rate citizens. There are few positive role models to encourage them or to instigate any belief that women can overcome this oppression and achieve something for themselves and their society.

As I have mentioned already, all the books in the list from which the fiction to be studied is chosen are written by men. I have come across no evidence that this has been, or is being, questioned. Can we assume that male writers are as capable of presenting the female view as that of the male? The evidence above would suggest that they are not. It would seem to be imperative, then, that the work of selected female writers also be acknowledged and read to give a more balanced view. Why is this not happening?

Women writers emerged in Africa in the 1970s, with greater access to education, bringing a female view to the issues of cultural conflict and economic change. However, Adeola James (1990) says, "To say that the creative contributions of African women writers has not always been recognized is to put the case mildly. In fact, the women's voice is generally subsumed under the massive humming and bustling of her male counterpart who has been brought up to take women for granted."

Lloyd Lesley Brown, (1981) has similar ideas, saying, "The women writers of Africa are the other voices, rarely discussed and seldom accorded space in the repetitive anthologies and the predictably male oriented studies in the field."

Flora Veit-Wild's *Survey of Zimbabwean Writers* (1989), highlights the lack of confidence felt by the women who have to contend with, and overcome, disinterested publishers, unsupportive husbands and families and, in some cases, active discouragement, in order to write and attempt publication.

The low, but rapidly increasing numbers of women writers have reflected a truism in modern African history. Women have had less access to education and much greater demands on their time. It is a self-perpetuating situation. For many years publishing and

literary criticism throughout the world have been male dominated and this male oriented selectivity is reflected in Africa, creating a situation of institutionalised ignorance of women writers and their work. Perhaps, partly because of this situation, women's writing has concentrated on exposing their status in society in a similar fashion to the concentration on the experience of colonialism and neo-colonialism which typifies male writing.

In Africa the ignoring of women writers is a symptom of the place in society to which women have been relegated. It is part of 'tradition'. As Bessie Head says in 'The Collector of Treasures' (1977: 92);

The ancestors made so many errors and one of the most bitter making things was that they relegated to men a superior position in the tribe, while women were regarded, in a congenital sense, as being an inferior form of life.

Ama Ata Aidoo reinforces this view in discussion with Adeola James (1990), when she says, "The question of the women writer's voice being muted has to do with the position of women in society. Generally women writers are just receiving the writer's version of the general neglect and disregard that women in the larger society receive."

Adeola James (1990) claims that women writers have been concerned with the overriding themes of African writing – the poverty and corruption and destructive practices that have impeded development in Africa – but that women appear to address more conscientiously the themes of love and death, transcendence, and the struggle to rise above the traditional limitations responsible for women's underdevelopment and oppression. "...their pervasive theme can be summarized as, the shared journey towards a new dawn for women and for Africa."

While interviewing African women writers for 'In Their Own Voices — African Women Writers Talk', (1990) James addressed the question of whether or not male authors can speak for women.

Of Rebeka Njau she asked...

Do you think the men writers write for us?

Rebeka Njau replied....

No, they look at the traits they want in a woman and that is the kind of woman

they portray.

Returning to 'Things Fall Apart', for an example, the Nigerian writer Buchi Emecheta, in conversation with James, says, "The good woman, in Achebe's portrayal, is the one who kneels down and drinks the dregs after her husband. In his view that kind of subordinate woman is the good woman."

Questioning the Nigerian poet and critic Molaria Ogundupe-Leslie, James asked...

Do you really feel that these men (Achebe etc) can speak for us?

Ogundupe-Leslie replied...

No they cannot speak for us.

In the same set of interviews, Zaynab Alkali spoke of the representation of African women in literature, saying,

"I can confidently say that in African literature women are not even adequately presented not to talk of being treated one way or another. With very few exceptions, women are generally ignored and at best given minor characterization to give the story life-likeness. I am certain some male writers would have done away with women characters if they could."

Alkali identifies her own inspiration to write as being

". . .the general attitude of the society towards the female, commonly referred to as the 'weaker sex'. I am irked by the fact that most women see themselves as 'weak' and incapable of attaining the highest peak of intellectual development."

Other women too, recognize a responsibility to attempt to reverse the situation of male dominance and misrepresentation of women. Asenath Odaga in conversation with James had this to say;

"Long before I was aware of the Women's Liberation movement I always liked to make my central female character exemplary and very, very strong.. . I hope when more African women write they will try to give African Woman the dignity she deserves and put her in the right place."

Ama Ata Aidoo expressed the same positive approach.

"I am definitely committed in my own way to the development of women... It seems to me natural that one should see women as they are operating in their lives. I've never believed that women are soft at all."

Generally the protest of the women writers is directed at inequality and male

domination in tradition which has been perpetuated in modern society. They emphasize the need for women to develop their potential and to assert their own strength of will and for writers to help them in this task.. It remains for most female and male readers to be exposed to this type of writing.

Since it is evident that a balanced course in African literature in English should include writing by African women, it is important to identify some suitable works. Six books are suggested, a brief description of which follows. A list of other books, which might be considered for study or to be held in school libraries, is included as Appendix 2. As all these novels have been selected for their positive, although not necessarily pristine, images of women, their strong female role models, and their alternative gender relationships, I have not included a close analysis on the basis of gender presentation. The inclusion of books such as these would add to the depth and range of choice for readers. In contributing to the concept of education as an agent for change, they would be an important addition for male as well as female students.

### **MURIEL AT METROPOLE**

A novel by Miriam Tlali (South African) 1979

Edition used 1994 Longman African Writer's

In this semi-autobiographical novel, Miriam Tlali, a writer passionately involved in the politics of South African liberation and women's liberation, (Tlali 1989), using Muriel as her narrator, gives an authentic, interesting and, at times, amusing account of the daily life in a large furniture and electrical appliance store in Johannesburg which is owned by a white Jew. Muriel is a young black woman employed as a typist/clerk and her life out side the 'shop' is barely touched on. The writer uses her as an observer and recounter of life for blacks, whites and coloureds under the white regime. There is little development of character beyond its effect on the activities and interactions in the 'shop'. However, the account of these activities and interactions shows a shrewd and sensitive understanding of character, background and attitudes.

Need less to say, Muriel is not without her own attitudes, formed by her life experiences, and the writer uses her to comment, a little didactically, on the inequality of conditions for blacks and whites within the work environment and in society as a whole. The authenticity of voice, to a large extent counteracts the didactic tone of some

of the commentary. Muriel is aware of her position within her own society as a woman. In filling out hire purchase forms for black customers she is required to see their passes, and comments, "The men hate it when I ask to see their passes. They feel that they are being subjected to unnecessary scrutiny, and they can't stand that from a woman!" (pg.81).

When a customer, a Portuguese East African citizen who has been working in the mines in South Africa for many years, buys a radio as a gift for his 'girl friend', Muriel questions him for the purpose of filling in the forms. She discovers that he has children with his girl friend but does not visit her family since he has paid no bride price. His 'wife' and her children remain in Portuguese East Africa, (Mozambique) where he visits them once a year. Muriel comments on the vulnerability of the two women and their children and questions "a system based on cheap labour, which undermines all laws of morality and decency, making nonsense of the family unit" (pg. 61).

The reader gets a small insight into Muriel's relationship with her husband when Johannes, the 'tea boy' is absent and Muriel, despite her workload and position, is asked to make tea. In the evening she tells her husband. Regardless of the family's obvious need for Muriel's income, he replies, "No, you can't. You must resign. Give in your notice immediately!" (pg. 118). Muriel comments, "My husband was aware of all the repercussions yet he was willing to make the sacrifice" (pg. 118). The readers are given a very good example of a husband's respect for, and loyalty to, his wife.

For Tanzanian students, most of whom have never experienced institutionalized racism, but who are aware of the support given by their government to the ANC in order to put in place a democratically elected government, the novel has relevance and interest.

## **DESTINATION BIAFRA**

A novel by Buchi Emecheta (Nigerian) 1982

Edition used 1994 Heinemann African Writer's Series

Buchi Emecheta is one of the most able and prolific African women writers. A Nigerian, living in England, she chronicles African experiences, particularly those of

women, in Britain and Nigeria. This historical novel is a fictional, but historically accurate, account of important events in the history of modern Africa.

Destination Biafra is the code name for the coup carried out by young, mostly Sandhurst educated, army officers a few years after Nigeria's independence from Britain was declared, which ultimately led to the secession of Biafra and the Nigerian civil war. It tells of the manipulation by, and self-interest of, Western powers that stand to gain by access to Nigeria's oil and sales of arms and ammunition. It also deals with the futility of war, greed for power and wealth, corruption and the effect of these on the common people.

The novel recounts too, the story of Debbie; the young, rich, Oxford educated daughter of a corrupt politician and her involvement in the struggle for a peaceful, independent Nigeria as well as her personal struggle for an identity as a woman in the 'new' Nigeria.

She wanted to do something more than child breeding and rearing and being a good passive wife to a man whose ego she must boost all her days, while making sure to submerge every impulse that made her a full human (pg.44).

Debbie's refusal to accept the traditional female role dictated by her society and her desire to play an active political role in her society lead her into undreamed of and horrifying situations in which she cements a solidarity with other women at the mercy of the war. Debbie's idealism is counteracted by her mother's well-founded cynicism.

These men whether in uniform or not, will repeat the very mistakes the so called politicians made. You mark my words. I can't stop you; you're a grown woman. Go to the Biafra of your dreams, and when you get there you'll find ordinary people. And where there are people there will be corruption and exploitation. You can't change human nature (pg. 153).

Although there are numerous examples of women acquiescing to their traditional roles, Emecheta allows them a voice. The reader learns their thoughts about their situation and the motivation for their actions and their extreme resourcefulness, despite their situation, is highlighted.

Debbie, herself, is a strong idealistic young woman who has achieved academic success and fights against gender role expectations. In the chaos, which reigns as the civil war finishes, she refuses the opportunity to 'escape' to England, saying, "I am a woman and a woman of Africa. I am a daughter of Nigeria and if she is in shame, I shall stay and

mourn with her in shame” (pg. 242). She sees a productive role for herself in rebuilding a united Nigeria.

This is an exiting, provocative novel, which is very relevant to the female and male students studying at A level.

### **SO LONG A LETTER**

A novel by Mariama Ba (Senegalese) 1980 Translated from French by Modupe Bode Thomas

Edition used 1989 Heinemann African Writers Series

“There is a cry everywhere, everywhere in the world — a woman’s cry is being uttered. The cry may be different, but there is still a certain unity.”

So said Mariama Ba when interviewed after winning the Noma Award for this novel in 1980. The nature of this cry, and its implications, personal, social, psychological, cultural, political and economic, constitute the principal focus of ‘So Long A Letter’ (Chan 1987)

This is a story of abandonment, an almost exclusively female physical and psychological condition which transcends race and class. The protagonist and narrator of the novel is Ramatoulaye, a Senegalese woman, and the narration takes the form of a letter to her friend, Aissatou. The letter is motivated by the death of Ramatoulaye’s estranged husband and encompasses her thoughts and feelings as a woman in a male dominated, Muslim, African society and particularly how she manages to survive socially, economically and emotionally after her husband, Modou, takes a second wife. Its flash back structure allows the reader to join Ramatoulaye in her journey to self-understanding. Her friend, Aissatou, has gone through the same experience and Ramatoulaye’s reflections on her reaction allow the reader to understand the isolation of married women who refuse to accept polygamy in a society where it is sanctioned by Islam. These two women are central to the novel and are shown as strong, resourceful people, capable of achievement within the domestic sphere and in the world of paid employment.

Ramatoulaye acknowledges the liberating influence of the education she has received.

She is a teacher herself and fosters the education of all her twelve children, but she also realizes how this education causes a dilemma for women when the modern life vies with the traditional life and women like herself, while wishing to conform to tradition, want, too, to reject what in society ties women down and denies them a voice.

An important theme of the novel is female solidarity, illustrated by the value of the relationship between Ramatoulaye and Aissatou, which, in turn, is a product of the friendship between their mothers and grandmothers, but Ramatoulaye implies that a greater solidarity among women is needed to overcome the desolation which is the outcome of polygamy. Her refusal to remarry is her stand against the system and she questions the collusion of older women which helps to perpetuate it.

Ramatoulaye fails to reject polygamy but is, never the less, abandoned emotionally and economically. Assatou's assistance at this time, particularly in giving her a car and access to the technology that will alleviate her physical isolation, helps her to move into a new life of vitality and optimism.

The mastery of narration, the unusual form and the presentation of themes such as human relationships, traditional versus modern life, gender role expectations, class, education and religion in this novel make it an ideal vehicle for the study and discussion which would lead to the achievement of the syllabus goals.

## **NERVOUS CONDITIONS**

A novel by Tsitsi Dangaremba (Zimbabwean) 1988

Edition used 1990 Zimbabwe Publishing House

“Even if you do ignore me...it doesn't mean I'm not here.”

Thus says Lucia to Babamakuru (great father) identifying a dominant theme of this novel and the need of it's female characters to be visible, or known, not only to others but to themselves as well. The novel, set in pre independence Zimbabwe, is narrated by Tambudzai, a young girl living a rural life. The retrospective narration is Tambudzai's evidence that she has an identity, although this identity is forged, to some extent, through the assistance of other people.

Tambudzai asserts her independence initially when she is removed from school due to lack of money for school fees. Her father teases her by asking whether she can cook and feed books to her husband and her mother undermines her desire for education by advising her to endure the heavy burden of womanhood. The mother presents the traditional view of the society that the conventions of gender are unquestionable. Tambudzai, however, gains access to a piece of land and maize seed and sets out to produce a saleable commodity and 'earn' her education. She thereby removes herself from pre-colonial modes of production and patterns of thought, and moves into those which have been made available to her through colonialism. Eventually she gains admission to the mission school run by her uncle, Babamakuru, who is also in control of his extended family.

At the mission, where she stays with her relatives, her relationship with her cousin Nyasha is developed. While Tambudzai feels she must find a place for herself between the traditional and the modern life while attempting to retain the best of each, Nyasha rejects both. Having spent her early years in England where her parents studied, she has difficulty accepting the dictates of Shona society and the roles which her parents adopt within it, however she rejects all that the colonists have imposed on her country. She cannot find an identity or place for herself within her society and questions and analyses the political implications of the way in which they live. Her rejection of her society's demands upon her highlights these issues for the reader but has disastrous consequences for Nyasha.

Tambudzai's struggle is a more personal one. Unlike her mother, she is not resigned to her inferiority, not just as a woman but as a black person, or the inevitability of her poverty. She cannot forget the discrimination she has experienced as a girl and the squalid conditions of her home and is determined to "lighten her burdens". Nevertheless, when she is awarded a scholarship to a prestigious girls' secondary school she must have the approval of Babamakuru and is reminded, by him, that the purpose of her education is "to be married to a decent man."

I have concentrated on these two young women as their personal dilemmas typify those of the wider society, however the many other characters are developed with sensitivity and authenticity and there are realistic descriptions of the social life of the young people, the demands of their academic schedules and their relationships. The rural life is

not romanticized but there are a number of descriptive passages which illustrate its life enhancing qualities.

Interviewed by Jane Wilkinson, (1990) Tsitsi Dangaremba commented that she is always “conscious at the back of my mind that there is very little that a woman in Zimbabwe can pick up and say yes, I know, that’s me... I feel that gap so dreadfully.” Here is a novel that makes the African woman and her concerns and dilemmas visible and with which she can relate.

### **THE RIVER AND THE SOURCE**

A novel by Margaret A Ogola (Kenyan) 1995

Edition used 1998 Focus Publications Ltd.

“A home without daughters is like a spring without a source.”

This book won the Commonwealth Writers’ Prize, Africa Region- Best First Book 1995, and the Jomo Kenyatta Prize for Literature in the same year. It is a significant family tale laying emphasis on the importance of women as shapers of their own and their families’ destinies. Beginning with the birth of Akoko to a great Luo chief, it traces her childhood and her positive relationship with her father and brothers who love and respect her, and her marriage to the young chief Owuor Kembo. This marriage provides an alternative model within the Luo society, being founded on mutual respect and remaining monogamous. The story continues to trace this family through the female line, but with significant character development of numerous male family members, with a background of historical and social events in Kenya from the late 19th. century to the mid 1990s.

Important themes in the novel are inter-personal relationships, academic achievement, conflict between traditional and modern life, religious faith and family life. Gender determined roles are challenged with men and boys having to accept change and the undermining of their dominance. The development of strong, supportive relationships is a feature of the novel — between mothers and their daughters, sisters and brothers, husbands and wives, and, in the latest generation a mother and her daughter-in-law.

Academic achievement is lauded for women and men and the way in which Wanda and Aoro, a couple of the 90s, achieve their separate goals in the medical profession whilst raising a family and developing their own relationship creates a positive model for young people.

The young people in the final section of the novel are dealing with issues such as dating, study, exams, surviving on student grants, the threat of AIDS, inter-racial marriage and personal identity, all of which are of relevance to A level students. It is a very 'human' story.

## **EFURU**

A novel by Flora Nwapa (Nigerian) 1966

Edition used 1978 Heinemann African Writers Series

Flora Nwapa's novel, like those of Chinua Achebe, is set in Nigeria. It also resembles a number of Achebe's books in taking as one of its themes the breakdown of traditional society with the onset of colonialism bringing with it Western style education and law. Like Achebe, Nwapa describes the rhythms, expectations, interactions and outcomes of traditional life but she differs from him in placing a woman in the centre of her narrative and giving women individual identities and voices.

Efuru, around whom the events of the narrative are centred, is a young woman, the daughter of an eminent and much loved and respected elder. She has been brought up in the traditional manner and continues to respect and honour the traditions of her people unless they compromise her moral beliefs. She is beautiful, strong, physically and morally, kind and generous, and talented as a trader. "Any trade she put her hand to was profitable" (pg.136). Her fault lies in the fact that she has difficulty in conceiving. Efuru defies tradition in leaving her father's house to 'marry' the man of her choice, a 'nobody' who cannot afford to pay the dowry. It is through her own hard work that the dowry is finally paid and good relations are restored with her father. Her husband, Adizua, eventually goes off with another woman and Efuru makes the difficult decision to return to her father's household.

Later Efuru marries again to a man of whom her father approves and, although she has high hopes of this ‘devoted’ young man, and her new life with him, she is let down again and eventually returns once more to her father’s compound determined to live an independent life.

Efuru is an example of a woman who is prepared to give all she can to have a ‘normal’ and happy life but who has knowledge of her own worth and will not be compromised by the unreasonable expectations of men. Her development as a character and as a woman leads her to logical reasoning and she questions the traditions which belittle her and refuses to comply with them.

Although most of the characters in the novel expound views which support traditional values, there is a gentle irony in the way in which they are presented and in the narrative which invites the reader to question these views and their applicability to a changing life. For example, the gossip, Omirima, complains that her daughter in law would not allow her children to mix with those of Omirima because the later have yaws. Omirima sees this as inevitable and is shocked when this is questioned by her daughter-in-law. Her friend agrees with her.

“Our fathers suffered from it, so did our father’s fathers. I have not seen a person, in this town, who has not suffered from yaws,” Amede said.

“Leave her to fool around. She will regret it. These children get on my nerves. What exactly are they taught in that school of theirs that they mock at us and oppose us in nearly everything?” (pg. 194).

The message for the reader is that the daughter -in-law is right and that her knowledge will eventually bring about change. Likewise, in a conversation between Efuru’s second husband, Gilbert, and his friend, Sunday, the merits of sending girls to school are aired thus providing a valuable basis for discussion.

#### Summary of alternative novels:

The alternative novels which I have discussed briefly here are just six from a growing number of books by African women which, through the manner in which they portray women, and the alternative gender relations they present, offer opportunities for young readers to reach the objectives of secondary education in Tanzania. Inclusion of some of these novels, or others from the appended list, in the A level English syllabus would provide both a learning experience and a positive literary experience for teachers and students alike.

## CHAPTER SIX

### RESEARCH --THE QUESTIONNAIRES

My information on how students received and perceived the literature on the syllabus was gained through the administration of questionnaires. The questionnaires were administered in April 1999, the month before students sat their A level exams.

The five schools; Zanaki Girls' Secondary School, Tambaza Secondary School, Kilakala Girls' Secondary School, Ilboru Secondary School and Ngarenaro Girls' Secondary School, were in three different regions and varied in intake and composition of students. I questioned males as well as females in order to be able to compare their responses. The students ranged in age from 19 to 25.

#### The sample:

Zanaki Girls' Secondary School in Dar es Salaam is a government, girls' school, teaching forms one to six. Its 1400 students, who attend in two separate sessions, are predominantly day students although there is a hostel, housing 110 students, which was opened in the mid 1980s.

The school has a long history. It opened in 1940 as The Aga Khan School for Girls and was nationalized in the early 1970s remaining a girls' school but changing its name. The head teacher and deputy head are women and of the 95 teachers 71 are women. The A level English teacher is a man. There is no school library and classroom facilities are extremely basic. The school's copies of the set texts have to be shared between forms five and six. The school is running a pilot programme, supported by the French Embassy, in teaching French. There are two A level 'streams' studying English. I administered the questionnaire with the class studying the combination, French, Kiswahili and English. There were 24 students in the class.

Tambaza Secondary School, Dar es Salaam, also has a long history. Prior to Independence it was The Aga Khan Boys' Secondary School. After nationalization it became Tambaza Secondary School and in 1994 it underwent a complete change becoming a co-educational, day school teaching forms five and six only. It offers many different combinations of subjects. The head teacher is male and the deputy head is

female. The A level English teacher is male. Although there are more male than female students in the school, the balance was reversed in the class with whom the questionnaires were administered. This sixth form class is studying History, Kiswahili and English. There are 43 students in the class, however on the day the questionnaires were administered only 24 were present. The reasons given for this were the closeness of the exams (so students were just revising) and the heavy rain in Dar es Salaam at the time. The school is attempting to establish a library. Classroom conditions are extremely basic with only enough desks and chairs for the 24 students present. No student had copies of the texts with them in the classroom as these had been passed on to the fifth form students.

Kilakala Girls' Secondary School in Morogoro Region is a government girls' boarding school catering for form one to six students. It is what is termed a 'special school'. Students must achieve a division one or two pass in their primary school leaving exams to gain admittance to a 'special school'. In April there were 501 students but this was expected to build up to over 600. The head teacher is female and there are 26 female teachers and 16 male teachers. The A level English teacher is female. Despite the nature of the school, it is poorly resourced and classroom conditions are basic. The school offers four different combinations for A level study including History, Geography and English. The questionnaire was administered with the sixth form English class of 20 students.

Ilboru Secondary School was established in 1946 in the Usambara Mountains. It was established and run by the Lutheran Church in response to the need and desire of their parishioners for secondary education, and known as The Lutheran Secondary School. The site was chosen as there were buildings available there but it was always intended to shift the school to the mission in Arusha and this happened soon afterwards. The Lutheran Church financed and ran the school until 1970 when it was taken over by the government, renamed and opened to boys of any religion. A substantial building programme was maintained and a self-reliance programme established on the school's land. Great emphasis was placed on academic achievement and currently the school is a 'special school' with well-deserved pride in its exam results. There are 1006 students, almost all boarders, and 28 teachers 12 of whom are female. The head teacher and deputy head are male as is the A level English teacher. The school was well established by the Lutheran Mission and since Independence has had considerable assistance from

outside organizations including the placement of many volunteer teachers. However the government's present inability to support education financially is beginning to take its toll. This is evident in the school library which has had very few new books in the past ten years particularly in the fiction section.

Ngaranaro Girls' Secondary School is a private Catholic school for girls situated in a busy, built up residential / commercial area of Arusha. It was established in 1984 and fulfils a need for secondary education for students who have not gained admittance to a government secondary school. It caters for 520 boarding and day students. The head teacher is a Catholic sister from Goa. The English literature teacher is a male 'borrowed' from Ilboru Boys' Secondary School. The physical conditions in the school are very basic however a building programme is in progress which will increase classroom numbers and improve boarding facilities. The only 'library' was in a cupboard in an office to which the students had very little access.

### **The Questionnaires:**

I administered one general questionnaire and followed this with questionnaires based on the specific texts the students had read. The questionnaires are appended. (Appendix 3)

Students were free to ask me for help if they did not understand what was required and, if necessary, I used Swahili to explain. Only at Tambaza did the teacher stay in the room.

### **The General Questionnaire:**

With this questionnaire I was endeavouring to establish if students read outside of their course and, if so, what kind of books they read and enjoy and why. I also wanted to find out if they related the content of the set texts to themselves and, if so, if this was a positive experience or a negative one. In question five I wanted to ascertain if there was any relationship between what students enjoyed about books and the set texts. I was interested in whether the responses to the texts would be completely conditioned by the learning experiences they had had or would contain an element of individuality. I also wanted to compare the male and female responses. There were 93 female and 22 male respondents.

**Question 1 What kind of books do you enjoy?**

Table 6.1 shows the responses to this question.

**TABLE 6.1 Types of books students enjoy.**

TYPES OF BOOKS IDENTIFIED	FEMALE RESPONDENTS	%	MALE RESPONDENTS	%
Novels	24	25	7	38.8
Short Stories	10	10.7	0	-
Plays	10	10.7	1	4.5
Poetry	2	2.2	0	-
One or more of the set texts for A or O level	15	16	1	4.5
Books about love/romance	37	39.7	5	22.7
Books about politics	6	6.5	5	22.5
Books with an educational message	5	5.4	0	-
Books about war	1	1.1	0	-
Books about women's liberation and women's lives	3	3.2	0	-
Books about life as a whole	7	7.5	3	13.6
Mystery/ detective/ spy books	4	4.3	4	18.2
Books about religion	13	14	3	13.6
Books about different societies	1	1.1	0	-
Books about family issues	2	2.2	0	-
Children's stories and fairy tales	2	2.2	0	-
Humorous books	1	1.1	0	-
History	4	4.3	3	13.6
Non fiction	4	4.3	0	-
Adventure	10	10.7	2	9.1
Sad books	3	3.2	0	-
Books about young people	2	2.2	0	-
Crime books	1	1.1	0	-
Books that talk of me	1	1.1	0	-
Books on philosophy	0	-	1	4.5

*Table continued...*

TYPES OF BOOKS IDENTIFIED	FEMALE RESPONDENTS	%	MALE RESPONDENTS	%
Books on economic issues	1	1.1	2	9.1
Books on social issues	2	2.2	4	18.2
Books about peace and justice	2	2.2	0	-
Number of respondents	93		22	

Every kind of book mentioned by a respondent has been recorded. The high number of students who identified one or more of the set texts from the O or A level courses or who used the general terms novels, short stories or plays indicates that there are many students who do not read widely, if at all, beyond the set texts. There are a number of possible reasons for this but two, which I suggest, are lack of access to books and limitations on time. Only two of the five sample schools have a library and neither of these libraries have a wide selection of books for recreational reading. Books, relative to income, are expensive to buy in Tanzania and choice is limited. One student from Zanaki commented, "I found it difficult to get books due to financial problems because they are not given free of charge." Although libraries exist in most towns and cities, they have very limited budgets and their fiction sections have had few additions since the 1960s. Rural children do not have access to libraries and are also subjected to very irregular or no electricity supply.

For day students, especially the young women, there are many demands on their time such as household chores and child minding which, added to the lack of a 'reading culture' in Tanzania, prevents them spending their time out of school in reading. The recent introduction of television to Tanzania has undoubtedly affected the study habits of some day students as well.

Looking at the types of books mentioned, it is clear that books about love and romance are popular with males and females and books about 'life as a whole', religion, adventure and politics are also popular. Mystery /detective /spy stories feature particularly with the male students who also identify books on social and economic issues as being interesting to them. One female student articulated the fact that she enjoyed books which 'talk of me'.

**Question 2** Outside of your literature course, have you read other books in English during the past two years which you have found interesting and enjoyable? If so, name them and say what you enjoyed about them.

By asking this question I hoped to identify specific books which students had read and the reasons why they had found them interesting or enjoyable. I also hoped to discover if there were differences in choice between the males and the females. Table 6.2 shows the results. I have recorded the names of books and authors as written by the respondents.

TABLE 6.2 List of books read during the last two years.

	FEMALE	%	MALE	%
No response	21	22.9	1	4.5
O or A level texts identified	13	14	0	-
No specific identification – general response only	11	11.8	0	-

#### LIST OF BOOKS IDENTIFIED BY FEMALE STUDENTS

The Gift—Danielle Steele	Jane Eyre—Charlotte Bronte
Full Circle—Danielle Steele	Evita
The Promise—Danielle Steele (3)	Rush Hour
Daddy—Danielle Steele	Waiting to Exhale
Star—Danielle Steele	Gulliver's Travels
Nothing Lasts Forever—Sydney Sheldon	Scarlet Letter
If Tomorrow Comes - Sydney Sheldon (2)	Three Days With God
Master of the Game—Sydney Sheldon	Jennifer (2)
No Easy Task	Poor Little Rich Girl
Naughty Child	A Child of Africa
Madeleine	The Flesh
Forgive Me Mariam (2)	Come Easy—Go Easy –J.H. Chase
Sweet Valley High	Treasure Island
Meet Me In Istanbul	Family Matters
	Pioneers or Settlers

Temptation and Other Stories

Star Wars

The Secret Garden

The Little Princess

The Pet Cemetery

The Death of Jesus

The Other Side of Midnight

Egyptian Honey Moon

Mother of Africa

Temptation—Agola Andura

A Man Without a Home

Meeting in the Jungle

Sunday Plan

Prisoner

The Dilemma

Zero Hour—Ben R Mtobua

Something to Hide

The Great Ponds

The Last Princess in Town

After 4:30

Woman of Substance—Barbara Taylor

Hold The Dream

Tested By Fire

The Essentials of Prayer

Mills and Boon Books

#### Reasons given for enjoying the book/s.

- I compared the main character with someone I know
- The book had a happy ending (2)
- The book gave a true picture of life (10)
- It shows how other people live in different situations (2)
- It made me cry (2)
- It dealt with the 'rags to riches' theme
- It had characters I relate to (3)
- It was about teenage life (2)
- It had humour in it (2)
- It dealt with emotions and feelings (3)
- I liked the narrative style
- It was philosophical but familiar
- It was relevant to African society
- It was religious (4)
- It was about my tribe and culture
- It was exciting
- It had family relevance
- It taught me how to live (8)
- It explains a woman's situation and provides a good example
- It was about oppression by men

## LIST OF BOOKS IDENTIFIED BY MALE STUDENTS

Oliver Twist—Dickens	Temptation—A Anduru
Married Love is a Plant	Troubles—David Mohini
Nick Carter the Cobra Killer (2)	Hawaii—Michener
Love Without Jean	Relationships
The Way to Success	Making the Corpse Walk—J.H. Chase
Mills and Boon books (3)	Lay Her Among the Lilies—J.H. Chase
Patriarchs and Prophets	Secret Lives—Ngugi (2)
Great Controversy	I'll Find Him- I'll Fix Him
The Coast of Loneliness	The Man From Pretoria
Hand of Starvation	Life in the Jungle—James
What is Better than Money? Poisoned Love	Gulliver's Travels
Animal Farm—Orwell	Treasure Island
The Homework Machine	

**Reasons given for enjoying the book/s**

- It taught me how to overcome troubles
- It was about politics
- It tells us how to live in peace
- It will help me in my life
- It deals with personal problems (2)
- I learnt about other people's lives (2)
- The characters are shown overcoming difficulties (2)
- The books refresh my mind.

As can be seen, 22 students gave no response at all and 11 failed to identify specific books saying such things as, "I like funny story books" and, "I like religious books because they teach me how to love God and love other people as myself." Thirteen students identified books they had read in their O level course. A total of 46, that is, almost half the students either had read no new books during the two years or were unable to remember and identify the books they had read. Only one of these students

was male. The books which have been named by the remaining students and the reasons given for liking them, seem to bear out the findings of question one. Books which deal with life, teach them how to live, deal with characters overcoming difficulties and with personal relationships are most popular. Religious books and exciting ones such as those written by James Hadley Chase also feature significantly.

There are very few books by African writers mentioned, and as far as I can determine, none by African women. My survey of bookshops and libraries showed that these are difficult to find however I suspect a lack of awareness that they exist in the students and teachers alike. The students appear to be reading what ever they can 'lay their hands on' and are developing their 'taste' in books on this basis.

**Question 3** Re-list the following statements in your order of importance:

- The book:
- A is believable
  - B is exciting
  - C has a happy ending
  - D has an interesting/educational message
  - E has characters which I can understand and relate to
  - F challenges me to some discussion, argument or action
  - G has a familiar setting
  - H deals with emotions and feeling that I understand
  - I has political themes which I understand and feel strongly about
  - J makes me hopeful about the world and my own future
  - K is set in recent times or the present

By giving the students a list of 11 possible descriptions of books and asking them to list them in their order of importance I hoped that a clear picture of their preferences would emerge and that if there was a difference between male and female preferences this would be visible.

The results are shown in Table 6.3.

*See overleaf.*

TABLE 6.3 Female responses to General Questionnaire, question 3

The numbers, 1-11, show order of preference.

The book:-	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
A is believable	15	6	1	3	1	7	7	12	6	4	1
B is exciting	15	7	2	3	6	1	5	7	12	2	2
C has a happy ending	8	8	3	2	1	1	3	2	6	14	11
D has an interesting/educational message	21	18	11	11	7	2	-	2	-	3	-
E has characters which I can understand and relate to	2	11	14	14	11	10	3	4	-	3	-
F challenges me to some discussion, argument or action	5	12	12	9	12	7	9	2	6	1	1
G has a familiar setting	-	6	3	6	11	6	7	5	6	7	2
H deals with emotions and feeling which I understand	10	3	17	13	8	12	8	3	2	1	1
I has political themes which I understand and feel strongly about	-	3	6	8	7	5	11	7	5	3	9
J makes me hopeful about the world and my own future	6	10	12	10	9	11	7	6	2	1	2
K is set in recent times or the present	8	3	4	4	10	8	4	7	8	10	4

Five female students did not respond to this question.

TABLE 6.4 Male responses to General Questionnaire, question 3

The numbers, 1-11, show order of preference.

The book:-	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
A is believable	5	1	2	-	1	-	1	3	2	2	1
B is exciting	1	1	2	-	4	3	1	1	3	1	2
C has a happy ending	-	1	-	-	1	1	2	4	-	4	2
D has an interesting/educational message	6	5	3	2	1	2		1	-	-	-

*Continued overleaf:*

The book:-	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
E has characters which I can understand and relate to	-	3	4	3	1	2	2	1	1	1	1
F challenges me to some discussion, argument or action	-	3	3	4	3	3	2	-	1	-	-
G has a familiar setting	-	-	-	2	2	2	3	2	1	2	-
H deals with emotions and settings which I understand	2	2	3	2	1	1	2	-	-	-	-
I has political themes which I understand and feel strongly about	2	1	1	4	-	1	-	-	4	2	-
J makes me hopeful about the world and my own future	4	3	2	4	2	1	4	3	1	-	1
K is set in recent times or the present	1	2	2	-	1	2	-	-	2	1	3

The low number of males in the sample makes it difficult to draw any strong conclusions from their responses to this question however it is clear that they consider it important that a book has an interesting or educational message, that it challenges them to some discussion, argument or action and that it makes them feel hopeful about their own future and the world. The setting of the book is not considered important and a happy ending is certainly not a requisite.

The female's responses varied widely but they did agree with the males on the importance of a book having an interesting or educational message. They seemed to want to situate themselves more securely in the book than the males, wanting the book to be believable and giving, "has characters which I can understand and relate to" and "deals with emotions and feelings I can understand" greater precedence. They, like the males, show a preference for books which make them hopeful about the world and their own future. A large number of the females showed a preference for books which are exciting.

My impression is that these responses are somewhat conditioned by the students' lack of reading. Their responses may reflect the limited range of books to which they have been exposed and the emphasis which has been placed on books which they study and

which are presented as literature. The responses to question 2 show that these are the only books that some students have read in the last two years. One female student's comment, "I enjoyed 'The Promise' by Danielle Steel but the literature books have something in addition as they portray what is in our African society, i.e. they are relevant", indicates that she has a very limited understanding of 'literature'.

**Question 4 Have any of the characters, situations or actions in the books you have studied given you positive or negative ideas about your own future life, career choices etc?**

In asking this question, I hoped to find out if the students saw the set texts as having relevance to their own lives and /or recognized that their own attitudes and ideas might be affected by reading them. Table 6.4 shows the results. Some students recorded receiving both negative and positive ideas.

**TABLE 6.4 Responses to General Questionnaire, question 4**

RESPONSE	FEMALE	%	MALE	%
Yes--positive ideas	53	57	14	64
Yes--negative ideas	37	40	1	4.5
No--or inappropriate response	18	19.4	6	27
Number of respondents	93		22	

The results shown in the table make it clear that the 'feel good' factor for males on reading the set texts was more evident than it was for females. The only negative reaction from a male was:

"No matter how hard I work I may be neglected by society."

Following is a list of positive reactions from the male students:-

- We are taught to be honest and trustworthy when in positions of power.
- We learn about the ways people solve conflicts.
- I read about characters who despise their African traditions after education and I learned that this is not what I want to do.

- There are good examples of freedom fighters.
- I saw that life is a struggle but we must tackle it positively.
- I got the idea that one should have the strength of one's convictions regardless of other people's opinions.
- Although the events I read about were heartbreaking, I felt positive at the end.
- By looking at the positive and negative aspects of the novels I am able to come up with constructive ideas for my own future.
- I saw that a strong man is the one who succeeds.
- I realized that there is a need for committed leadership in all countries.
- I understand that society should use cooperative efforts to achieve its goals.

The female students recorded many negative reactions to the content of the novels as they relate to them, such as:

- I wondered how I could survive in a society where nepotism is so strong.
- The literature books don't show me anything positive. There are no solutions to the problems.
- It is impossible to overcome corruption.
- I saw that bad leadership prevents people from succeeding.
- I felt that girls are not safe to live and move in society.
- I saw that it's difficult to make your dreams come true.
- I felt that the evil in society is too difficult to overcome.
- Corruption has a hold in Africa and will ruin my life.
- There is so much betrayal in society by people wanting to better themselves.
- The female characters are shown as being very weak.
- I saw that many women can only survive by selling their bodies.
- Those who fought for Independence are not the ones who got power.
- I'd like to work in politics but it seems impossible to do this and be honest.
- I see that even close friends and relatives can betray me.
- There was so much corruption, conflict and prostitution in the lives the novels showed.

There were also positive reactions from the female students:

- I understand more about society and how to deal with it.
- Not only men can make changes in society.

- Most characters faced up to the prevailing situations and didn't try to escape.
- I have to learn to be independent.
- I saw that people can overcome immense problems.
- I learned that I should not rely on men in my life and must find a way to depend on myself.
- Life is tough but I must work hard because things must be better some day.
- Mumbi is a strong and beautiful woman and maybe I could be like her.
- Different characters show me that life is tough and I need to struggle.
- The value of truth is portrayed.
- The books teach me about real life and how I must deal with it.
- In order to achieve I must have endurance and tolerance.
- Females were able to contribute to the freedom fights.
- I saw the importance of cooperation among people to build a new society.
- I saw other people's problems and thought of how I would have overcome them.
- I saw people taking a stance on the basis of their morals.
- Some people are strong enough to give up their lives for their country.

Most of the student's responses to the literature texts are non-specific and some seem rather conditioned and 'teacher guided', however there is evidence that some students do relate the content of the books to themselves and recognize that the content may shape their thinking.

There is also strong evidence that it is a less positive experience for the female students than for the males.

**Question 5 Which of the books you have studied on the English Literature course did you enjoy most or find most interesting?**

Table 6.5 shows the results. Although my research concerned the suitability of African novels and plays on the course, it can be seen that the preference of some students is for non-fiction or poetry. Some students identified more than one book. The students answering the general questionnaire had not read 'God's Bits of Wood'.

**TABLE 6.5 – Responses to General Questionnaire, question 5**

TITLE OF BOOK	FEMALE	%	MALE	%
The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born	38	40.8	8	36.4
A Grain of Wheat	31	33	9	40.9
A Man of the People	4	4.3	1	4.5
The Trial of Dedan Kimathi	23	24.7	3	13.6
Petals of Blood	2	2.2	1	4.5
An Enemy of the People	7	7.5	5	22.7
The Arusha Declaration	3	3.2	0	-
Sewing The Seeds of Revolution	2	2.2	0	-
Song of Lawino	5	5.4	1	4.5
No or inappropriate response	13	14	1	4.5
Number of respondents	93		22	

Some of the reasons given for preferences follow:

**'The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born'** by Ayi Kwei Armah

Female responses:

1. The use of language.
2. We still have a war to fight against corruption.
3. It reveals the situation in our societies.
4. It shows African culture.
5. It makes us aware of the evils of some African leaders.
6. It uses symbols, poetic language and imagery.
7. Although set in Ghana it is relevant to Tanzanian society.
8. It reflects reality.

Male responses:

1. The plain and abusive language and the unique style.
2. The situation depicted and the relevance to Tanzania.

**'A Grain of Wheat'** by Ngugi wa Thiong'o

Female responses:

1. The characters were very strong and fought for what they wanted.

2. The setting was Kenya and it explained about colonialism.
3. I saw that in any struggle we need unity.
4. I was impressed by the outcomes of sacrifice.
5. It's educative and exciting.
6. It deals with human experience.
7. It shows how Europeans exploited African wealth.

Male responses:

1. It tells of daily life- love, happiness, and sadness.
2. It shows the value of principles—people are ready to die for them.
3. It shows the dangers of tribalism.
4. It shows how we have to cope with and make the best of any given situation.

**'A Man of the People'** by Chinua Achebe

1. Mentioned by both male and female students:
2. It has relevant themes—corruption and hypocrisy.
3. It inspires people to look into their societies and make changes.

**'The Trial of Dedan Kimathi'** by Ngugi wa Thiong'o and Micere Mugo

Female responses:

1. I liked the interesting drama techniques.
2. I enjoyed the use of language including Swahili and Kikuyu.
3. It made me aware of the effect of colonialism.
4. It shows how women struggled for independence.
5. It shows love and unity among the Kikuyu people and strong and fearless characters.

Male responses:

1. It shows that success is always preceded by suffering and difficulties.
2. It shows how women can be involved in political affairs.

**'Petals of Blood'** by Ngugi wa Thiong'o

1. Mentioned by both male and female students:
2. It looks at all aspects of life, social, political, economic and emotional.
3. (...and of other books by Ngugi): They help me to understand my own history.

**'An Enemy of the People'** by Ibsen

Female responses:

1. It deals with truth.
2. I greatly admired the character Dr. Stockman.

Male responses:

1. I admired Dr. Stockman and would like to be able to stand alone like him.

**'The Arusha Declaration'**—non fiction—Julius Nyerere

1. I learnt about my country and its struggle to establish socialism.
2. It's about real, existing, important things.

Some students simply reproduced the descriptions used in Question 3. However there were genuine responses which largely focus on what can be learned from the book and how the messages can be applied in the students' own lives. Relevance to Tanzania is important to the students. There is almost no evidence of critical analysis of the writing and no evidence that any student challenges the premises made by the texts they have read. Acceptance of the writer's viewpoint and, possibly, the literature teacher's viewpoint appears to be almost total. Surprisingly, "The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born", despite its very negative images of women, was the most popular choice of the female students.

I added two questions to the original questionnaire and wrote them on the blackboard. Students responded to them on the back of the question sheet. They were:-

- What are your immediate future plans?
- What are your long term career plans?

### Question 6 What are your immediate future plans?

Table 6.6 shows the students' response to this question. The choice was free as I made no suggestions.

TABLE 6.6 Students' Future Plans

STUDENTS' FUTURE PLANS	FEMALE	%	MALE	%
University	63	67.7	20	90.9
Journalism / Broadcasting School	5	5.4	0	-
Teachers' College	2	2.1	0	-
Wildlife and Tourism College	2	2.1	0	-
Unspecified further education	0	-	1	4.5
No response	21	22.6	1	4.5

The high level of 'no response' could well be attributed to the fact that the question did not appear on the questionnaire but was written on the blackboard and, although students' attention was drawn to it, they may have forgotten or run out of time to respond. It may also indicate indecisiveness among the female students.

It is clear that by the time students have reached this stage of their secondary education they are aspiring to continue their studies with a high number of both males and females hoping to attend university. The figure of 67.7% of female students does not reflect the number of females currently studying at Dar es Salaam University in Tanzania, which is below 20%, and, therefore, I suspect their aspirations are unrealistic. Although it was outside the scope of my research, I feel that there is a great need for career education and guidance within the schools.

Many students wrote that, while waiting for their exam results they would like to undertake some interim study such as a computer course. Some hoped to find work in order to fill in the time. One male student hoped that, "The rumour that military training is being revived", was true so that he could do that before going to university.

### Question 7 What are your long term career plans?

Table 6.7 shows the list of career choices mentioned by the students and the numbers opting for each choice.

*Table overleaf.*

TABLE 6.7 Students' Career Choices

CAREER	FEMALE	%	MALE	%
Law	39	41.9	10	45.5
Church—preacher	0	-	1	4.5
National security	1	1.1	1	4.5
Journalism	6	6.5	2	9.1
Education / Teaching	7	7.5	2	9.1
Administration	2	2.2	0	-
Diplomatic	8	8.6	2	9.1
Company Secretary	1	1.1	0	-
Psychology	1	1.1	0	-
Sociologist / Development Practitioner	3	3.2	1	4.5
United Nations	1	1.1	0	-
Broadcasting	4	4.3	0	-
Computing	1	1.1	0	-
Wild life / Tourism	1	1.1	0	-
Writer	0	-	1	4.5
Environmentalist	0	-	1	4.5
Linguist	4	4.3	1	4.5
No response	14	15	0	-
Number of respondents	93	100	22	100

Clearly, the subject choices of the students, as outlined earlier, influence their career preferences. Given this limitation, and the lack of career guidance in the schools, I find it interesting that the choice is as wide as it is.

Of the Zanaki Girls' High School students who were studying languages only, 6 identified the diplomatic corps and 4 chose linguistics as a career.

The most popular choice by far is that of law with many students saying they would like to go on to be a judge or to have their own law firm. Although not asked, many students gave reasons for their choices and high among these in relation to law, was the idea that they could do something to help the oppressed with comments such as, "I would like to give their rights to people who are oppressed by others." coming from one female

student and from another female student, “I would like to be a lawyer so that I can help women and children who have problems.” A third female student wrote, “I can destroy the hopeless thought that women are inferior.”

The student choosing journalism as a career identified the wish to help people by putting the ‘truth’ in front of the public and the reason behind a number of choices was so that students could help to improve the environment and prevent pollution. Only one female and one male student mentioned salary as an incentive to their choice.

### **Text Specific Questionnaires**

Unfortunately, the five sample schools had all studied the same three fiction texts so I was not able to get reactions to as wide a range of the literature as I had hoped. The books studied were:

- “The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born” by Ayi Kwei Armah
- “A Grain of Wheat” by Ngugi wa Thiong’o
- The play “The Trial of Dedan Kimathi” by Ngugi wa Thiong’o and Micere Mugo.

Odd students had read other books but not the numbers to warrant administering the questionnaires. I did administer the questionnaire on “God’s Bits of Wood” by Sembene Ousmane, and explain how, later in this chapter.

### **“The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born” by Ayi Kwei Armah**

Set in Ghana after Independence, this novel focuses on the corruption which is rife in society and one man’s struggle to retain his integrity and remain uncorrupted.

73 female students and 17 male students responded to the questionnaire.

**Question 1 This novel is centred on the difficulties experienced by ‘the man’ in trying to relate to and be fulfilled as a person within his society. It does not deal with his wife Oyo’s thoughts and difficulties. This gives the novel a rather one-sided effect. Why do you think that is?**

Because the point of view of this book is that of ‘the man’ and the character of his wife Oyo is extremely underdeveloped, I was interested in whether the students had recognised this aspect of the writing and had attempted to see the concerns and the

events of the novel from the view point of the wife who is depicted so negatively. I also wanted to know whether students perceived this one sided effect and rationalised it in any way. Some respondents contributed more than one idea. Their responses are detailed below in table 6.8

TABLE 6.8 Responses to the presentation of the main female character.

RESPONSES	FEMALE	%	MALE	%
Recognition of Oyo as a character in her own right <b>Comments</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It hides the real situation (female)</li> <li>• She was bad and uncooperative (male)</li> <li>• All women are represented negatively (female)</li> <li>• She just sought a good life (female)</li> <li>• She was against her husband (female)</li> <li>• How can they cooperate as husband and wife if they don't share ideas? (female)</li> <li>• Her thoughts and difficulties were also represented by other characters while he stood alone (female)</li> </ul>	17	23.3	3	17.6
No recognition of Oyo as a character <b>Comments</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Her difficulties are his (male)</li> </ul>	12	16.4	4	23.5
The problems of the whole society are generalised by 'the man' <b>Comments</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• He's the main character (male)</li> <li>• He represents all men and women, therefore the novel is not one sided (male)</li> </ul>	13	17.8	4	23.5
Because women in society are oppressed by men and have no 'say' or position	2	2.7	1	5.9
It's culturally (African) acceptable to concentrate on 'the man' as he is head of the household	3	4.1	2	11.8

*Table continued...*

RESPONSES	FEMALE	%	MALE	%
Disagreement with my analysis	1	1.4	1	5.9
Reply dealing with the themes only	18	24.6	2	11.8
No or inappropriate reply	13	17.8	2	11.8

There was a high rate of acceptance of the presentation of the characters and few challenges to the writer's representation of the gender relations.

**Question 2 What do you imagine her difficulties and troubles were?**

The man takes a heroic stance against corruption and his wife initially is not supportive of this. In material terms she has difficulty feeding and clothing her children. They have no toilet or washing facilities in the house and no beds. Emotionally she was distanced from her husband as he did not confide in her or discuss his concerns, nor was he interested in her problems or how they might solve them together. I was interested in how the students viewed the difficulties which lay behind her behaviour. Their responses are detailed in table 6.9

TABLE 6.9 Oyo's difficulties and troubles as perceived by the students.

OYO'S DIFFICULTIES AND TROUBLES	FEMALE	%	MALE	%
Sympathetic responses:	20	27.4	1	5.9
• Lack of material things:				
Poverty				
Poor housing				
Children couldn't go to school				
Son had no shoes				
Lack of employment for her to earn extra money for development				
• Emotional problems:				
Anger				
Humiliation				
Her husband's attitude towards her				

*Table continued next page...*

OYO'S DIFFICULTIES AND TROUBLES	FEMALE	%	MALE	%
Unsympathetic responses: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• She was acquisitive</li> <li>• She was never satisfied</li> <li>• She's miserable because she's not living a good life</li> <li>• She wants to impress people and have luxury goods</li> <li>• She doesn't 'work' to help her husband</li> <li>• She is unrealistic and uncommitted</li> </ul>	38	52	9	52.9
Mention of theme only	1	1.4	1	5.9
No or inappropriate response	15	20.5	6	35.3

Again, there was a high rate of acceptance of the attitude of the author and the negative presentation of Oyo. Only one male student showed any sympathy for the difficulties she experienced and over half the female students failed to question or look beyond the presentation. The high number of students who failed to respond indicated that many didn't see Oyo as having any difficulties.

Of those students who responded sympathetically, most realised Oyo's practical / material difficulties but, as with question 1, a small number commented on the gender relations portrayed in her husband's attitude to her and the fact that they never discussed their problems or his philosophical stance.

### Question 3 **Do you consider them to be important?**

A high number of students failed to respond to this question, which leads me to believe that my use of the pronoun **them** may have been confusing. However I was present and available to answer questions. Although only 20 female students and 1 male had a sympathetic response to Oyo's problems, a greater number considered the problems to be important but for differing reasons. The responses are outlined in table 6.10.

TABLE 6.10 Responses to Question 3

RESPONSES	FEMALE	%	MALE	%
<b>Yes</b> <b>Comments</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Poverty kept the family suffering—they couldn't meet their basic needs.</li> <li>• She needed to become more independent—through employment perhaps.</li> <li>• She was concerned about her children.</li> <li>• They are representative of the problems of poor people in developing countries.</li> <li>• She represents society.</li> <li>• They help us to reflect and find solutions.</li> <li>• They contribute to her husband's downfall.</li> <li>• She attempted to change things in the wrong way.</li> <li>• Her family problems are important but not the others.</li> </ul>	25	34.2	9	52.9
<b>No</b> <b>Comments</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There's no need to copy Western life.</li> <li>• She has to think more of her husband.</li> <li>• She has to accept her position.</li> <li>• She's been affected by mental imperialism.</li> <li>• It's better not to live a luxurious life at the expense of others.</li> <li>• Her husband was leading a difficult life.</li> <li>• She should work.</li> </ul>	28	38.4	4	23.5
Answers dealing with thematic material.	6	8.2	0	-
No or inappropriate answer.	16	21.9	4	23.5

Once again, there is a significant negative response to the character but no questioning of the characterisation or the gender relations portrayed. Oyo's problems are seen, to a large extent, not as personal but as representative.

**Question 4** Re-read this section from the novel—"What will man.....left anywhere" (pg.64 East African Publishers Ltd. Kenya 1996)

The passage referred to is a particularly harsh indictment of women whose husbands went to fight for Britain in World War 2. They are portrayed as faithless, greedy and hypocritical. I found it an extraordinarily vindictive generalisation of the behaviour of wives and was interested in how it was perceived by the students. I divided the responses into those who appeared to agree with the description, those who disagreed and those who just made a general comment. A high number of students failed to respond possibly due to lack of access to the text. I read the passage out loud in each classroom due to the lack of texts. The responses are detailed in table 6.11

TABLE 6.11 Responses to Question 4

RESPONSE	FEMALE	%	MALE	%
<p><b>Agree</b></p> <p><b>Comments</b></p> <p>The comments were largely related to the theme of betrayal and emphasised the weakness of women e.g. It is very shameful to misbehave as a woman when left alone by our husbands. We have to be obedient and disciplined in our marriage.</p> <p>It shows the weakness of women when their husbands go off to war.</p>	15	20.5	6	35.3
<p><b>Disagree</b></p> <p><b>Comments</b></p> <p>This is unfair because according to my experience African women are faithful to their husbands even if they are not there. This passage tries to undermine the position of women in Africa.(female)</p> <p>I'm not happy about what is said in this passage because he (the writer) is not supposed to take it generally that all women are unfaithful to their</p>	17	23.3	4	23.5

*Table continued overleaf.*

husbands when they go to war. Some love their husbands and are happy to see them return. (female)				
It shows women's weakness in the absence of their men but it doesn't look on men's habits in the same case and not all women would behave so. (male)				
<b>Other – General</b>	9	12.3	2	11.8
<b>Comments</b>				
Most responses dealt with the political aspects of Ghanaian men being expected to fight in this war.				
No or inappropriate response	32	43.8	5	29.4

I find this a disturbingly high number of students, particularly males, who either agreed with or failed to question the description of female behaviour. In many cases the political issues supersede any recognition of gender discrimination and there is very little suggestion or recognition of the fact that men's behaviour is not subjected to the same scrutiny and judgements.

**Question 5 Is it an acceptable description of women when their husbands go off to war?**

This is really an extension of question 4 and some students had already expressed their acceptance or lack of it. Many of the students misunderstood the question and judged the behaviour itself rather than the description of it.

The responses are shown in table 6.12

TABLE 6.12 Responses to question 5

RESPONSES	FEMALE	%	MALE	%
Unacceptable	35	47.9	9	52.9
Acceptable	9	12.3	2	11.8
Undecided	5	6.8	1	5.9
No or inappropriate response (many judged the behaviour, not the description of it)	23	31.5	5	29.4

The undecided students mostly commented that some women might behave like that but not all.

**Question 6 Do you think it likely that you would behave like that if you were in that position?**

Obviously, this question was not appropriate for the male students who were instructed not to answer it. I was attempting to make the young women put themselves in the position of the women described in the novel and to predict their own behaviour. I wanted to see if personalising the situation changed their opinion of the description. Their responses are shown in table 6.13

TABLE 6.13 Responses to question 6

RESPONSE	FEMALE
Yes	11
No	51
No or inappropriate response	11

There is a close correlation between agreement with the description, (15), judging it to be acceptable, (9), and thinking one would behave like that, (11). However, in 9 out of 15 cases there was not individual correlation e.g. a student who found the description unacceptable may still think she might behave like that.

**Question 7 Are there any other descriptions of women or women's behaviour that you noted particularly or questioned when you read the book. If so please note them down.**

It is my contention that there are no positive images of women in this book and I was interested in whether the students were able to identify any or perceived any descriptions in a positive way. Some students made more than one response. The responses are shown in table 6.14

TABLE 6.14 Descriptions of female characters

DESCRIPTION	FEMALE	%	MALE	%
Women like to change themselves using cosmetics and perming their hair.	3	4.1	2	11.8
Women are untruthful, dealing artificially with their husbands.	2	2.7	0	-
Women are portrayed as people who value money and despise their culture.	1	1.4	0	-
Women are never satisfied.	1	1.4	0	-
Selfish and pompous, proud. (Koomson's wife)	23	31.5	5	29.4
Complaining, despairing, dissatisfied. (Oyo's mother)	2	2.7	2	11.8
Prostituting themselves.	26	35.6	5	29.4
Most affected by colonisation—politically, culturally—affected by cultural imperialism.	4	5.5	3	17.6
Brave.	1	1.4	0	-
Ignorant.	5	6.8	1	-
Greedy, proud, selfish. (Oyo)	7	9.6	1	5.9
Corrupt.	1	1.4	3	17.6
The author thinks that all things around women are bad.	3	4.1	0	-
Women are used to symbolise the rottenness and corruption in Ghana.	1	1.4	0	-
Weak and unable to tolerate difficulties.	1	1.4	0	-
Jealous.	0	-	1	5.9
Disappointed. (politically)	0	-	1	5.9
Advising.	1	1.4	0	-
Dependent.	0	-	1	5.9
No or inappropriate answer.	23	31.5	4	23.5

Some students made the observation that women became prostitutes because of poverty. Apart from two students who note a woman's role as an advisor and who mention bravery as a quality, the descriptions of women noted are all negative.

**Question 8 Which character, if any, do you relate to or admire in this novel?**

Character development is very limited in this novel with only ‘the man’ developed in a rounded manner. He is admirable for his stand against corruption but his close family relationships are inadequate. I was interested in whether the students would relate to or admire any other character. Some students gave the reasons for their admiration, which were interesting for me also. The responses are shown in table 6.15.

TABLE 6.15 Admired characters

CHARACTER	FEMALE	%	MALE	%
<b>The man</b> <b>Comments</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• He was honest.</li> <li>• Because of his stand against corruption.</li> <li>• He knew that to accept bribes hindered the development of others.</li> </ul>	41	56.1	9	52.9
<b>Oyo</b> <b>Comments</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• She was able to change and agree with her husband.</li> <li>• She tried to be modern.</li> <li>• She wanted to improve their lives.</li> </ul>	4	5.5	1	5.9
<b>Estella</b> (Koomson’s wife: she has money and style but is corrupt) <b>Comments</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• She is up to date.</li> <li>• She behaves like a white woman.</li> </ul>	2	2.7	0	-
<b>The Teacher</b> (he agrees with the man but seems more rational)	3	4.1	2	11.8
<b>Koomson</b> (a wealthy, corrupt politician)	3	4.1	0	-
<b>The Bus Conductor</b>	2	2.7	0	-
<b>Rama Krishna</b> (not a character but philosophies associated with him are discussed)	2	2.7	1	5.9
None	6	8.2	3	17.6
No or inappropriate answer	10	13.6	1	5.9

As might be expected, most students related to 'the man'. Although a total of 9 found no one to admire some were able to perceive good qualities in Oyo and the teacher and others admired characters for attributes not considered admirable by the author e.g. the possession of wealth and style. Only 7 students related to a female character.

### Summary

My own negative reaction to the negative portrayal of women in this book, as expressed in the Documentary Review, is born out to some extent by the students with almost all students identifying only negative and disparaging images of women in the writing and 44 finding the author's description of women as faithless, greedy and hypocritical unacceptable.

There is evidence, however, of considerable acceptance of these images and the negative gender relations depicted, by both male and female students. Over one third of the students find it acceptable to present a story in such a one-sided manner and to use the main female character to generalise all that is bad in society or to assume her ideas and concerns can be expressed by her husband. Only 21 students (one male) recognised that she had genuine problems which lay behind her behaviour, and almost half the students accepted the author's negative depiction of her. There was some genuine understanding of the effects of poverty, the worries about the children and the family problems but even those who thought Oyo's problems were important saw them in political or social terms e.g., they are representative of poor people's problems, or, they help us to reflect and find solutions. 32 students didn't find her problems significant and again the male students, in particular, took a socio / political approach, judging her to be affected by "mental imperialism."

Not surprisingly, the 'most admired' character was the man and the fact that only 17 students identify other characters, reinforces my criticism of character development in this novel.

The very widespread acceptance and consequent internalisation of these extremely negative images of women and negative depictions of gender relations can only be harmful to the students, male and female.

**“A Grain of Wheat”** by Ngugi Wa Thiong’o and Micere Mugo

Set during, and directly after, the fight for independence in Kenya, this novel is centred on the reasons for the struggle, the manner in which it was carried out and its effects. Ngugi deals with the political and personal effects on people’s lives, focusing, in the main, on the inhabitants of Rungai rural centre and its environs. He attempts to illustrate the situation of women within this society under stress and their direct and indirect efforts in the struggle.

The questionnaire concentrated on the main issues of the novel and the gender and other human relations it portrays. I wanted to ascertain the student’s reaction to the portrayal of the main female character, Mumbi, and to her status and situation in her society.

There were 87 female and 21 male respondents to this questionnaire.

**Question 1 What do you see as being the main issue in this novel?**

The novel has a number of strong themes, some more abstract than others and I wanted to see which of these had appeared most important to the students and whether there was an appreciable difference between the male and the female responses. The student’s responses are shown in table 6.16.

TABLE 6.16 Student’s opinions of the main issue.

STUDENTS’ OPINIONS OF MAIN ISSUE	FEMALE	%	MALE	%
The fight for independence/ freedom	44	50.5	12	57.1
Betrayal and alienation	10	11.5	7	33.3
Oppression and exploitation	5	5.7	1	4.8
Sacrifice (the symbolic significance of the title)	21	24.1	1	4.8
Colonialism and neo colonialism	3	3.4	0	-
The struggle for human rights	1	1.1	0	-
Disappointment	1	1.1	0	-
No or inappropriate answer	2	2.3	0	-

The responses identify the main thematic material of the novel clearly with female students placing greater emphasis on sacrifice and the symbolism of the title (that from sacrifice and death comes new birth and growth) and male students emphasising the aspect of betrayal.

**Question 2 Choose two characters from the novel and say how they are affected by this issue.**

In asking this question I was interested in how the students 'personalised' the abstract issues they had identified. I looked at their responses in terms of the type of effect identified and the characters chosen. Some students identified more than one effect. Their responses are shown in table 6.17

TABLE 6.17 Responses to question 2

TYPE OF EFFECT IDENTIFIED	FEMALE	%	MALE	%
Personal / emotional feelings	29	33.3	5	23.8
Political	24	27.6	4	19
Historical / factual	35	40.2	14	66.6
CHARACTERS IDENTIFIED				
Gikonyo	26	29.9	9	42.9
Mugo	24	27.6	9	42.9
Dr. Lynd	1	1.1	0	-
Mumbi	10	11.5	2	9.5
Kihika	53	60.9	15	71.4
Lt. Koinandu	1	1.1	0	-
General R	1	1.1	0	-
Wambui	1	1.1	0	-
Karanja	12	13.8	2	9.5
Wambuku	1	1.1	0	-
No or inappropriate response	0	-	0	-

It can be seen that only about one third of the female students and even less of the male students did consider the effects on the characters of the issues of the novel in a personal or emotional way. The characters were viewed much more in terms of the historical events in Kenya. For example one student after identifying 'The struggle against

oppression and exploitation and for independence’, as the main issue goes on to choose the characters Kihika and Gikonyo and explains the effects on them thus- ‘Kihika was hanged at Rungai because Mugo betrayed him to the white men when Kihika sought refuge with him.’ And, ‘Gikonyo was sent to detention where he experienced severe suffering because he was considered one of the freedom fighters.’

**Question 3 Mumbi has been taught to read by her brothers. Why is this? What is your reaction to this?**

Mumbi’s older brother, Kihika, gives up his education to participate actively in the liberation struggle. Her younger brother goes to university in Uganda during the course of the novel. She, however, has not even attended primary school. In asking for a reaction to this I was interested in whether students had thought sufficiently about this issue to formulate any opinion about it. In every classroom I had to explain the question and read the relevant passage out loud from the book so it was clear that the incident or the issue had not seemed particularly significant to most students.

Table 6.18 shows responses to the first part of the question.

**TABLE 6.18 Reasons for Mumbi being taught to read and write by her brothers.**

REASONS GIVEN	FEMALE	%	MALE	%
She didn’t go to school.	20	23	2	9.5
So that she could participate in the struggle and know about the world.	4	4.6	1	4.8
Women were not educated in those days as it was not considered a good investment by parents.	20	23	5	23.8
Colonialism meant that only a few people went to school.	5	5.7	2	9.5
The family didn’t trust colonial education.	0	-	1	4.8
Her brothers were proud of her.	1	1.1	0	-
So that she could communicate with other people.	1	1.1	1	4.8
She was ignorant.	2	2.3	0	-
Girls were considered inferior and not sent to school.	27	31	5	23.8
Her brothers knew the significance of education.	0	-	1	4.8
She was close to her brothers.	1	1.1	1	4.8
No or inappropriate response	6	6.9	2	9.5

There is a clear emphasis on the rationale that girls didn't go to school with 27 of the female students and 5 of the males noting that this was because girls were considered inferior, and 20 of the female students and 5 males noting that girl's education was considered a poor investment by parents. (as they would marry and join other families)

Table 6.19 shows the students' reactions to this situation.

**TABLE 6.19 Reactions to Mumbi's lack of education.**

REACTIONS	FEMALE	%	MALE	%
Everyone should have been going to school at that time.	4	4.6	1	4.8
It is worrying that Kenyan society thinks that women should still be in the kitchen.	3	3.4	0	-
Women have the right to education in order to face life with confidence and knowledge.	25	28.7	8	38
She would have grown up uninformed.	2	2.3	1	4.8
Her brothers didn't think she was a mere woman.	3	3.4	1	4.8
It is good that she was able to express her views opinions and problems when her brothers taught her to read and write.	1	1.1	0	-
I hate this system which kills the talent of African girls.	2	2.3	0	-
It was just the system at the time.	3	3.4	1	4.8
Societies should stop gender discrimination.	2	2.3	1	4.8
No or inappropriate response	42	48.3	8	38

Reactions to Mumbi's lack of education range from acceptance of the system which existed at the time to a reaction against all gender discrimination. The largest number of respondents noted that women have the right to education. To a certain extent these reactions may have been generated by my explanation of the question but it might be expected that students who have 'made it' through the education system to form 6 would affirm girls' right to a formal education.

**Question 4** Briefly describe two important relationships in the novel explaining why you consider them to be important.

I consider the relationships between the characters an important feature of this novel. I was interested to see, therefore, which relationships the students thought were important and their reasons for choosing particular relationships. Table 6.20 shows the range of relationships identified and the reasons why students considered them to be important.

TABLE 6.20 Important Relationships in "A Grain of Wheat"

Important Relationship	Reasons	Female	%	Male	%
Mumbi and Wangari	Care and love between two who are not relatives. Support. Comfort.		6.8	1	4.8
Mumbi and Kihika	Love and support between brother and sister	4	4.6	0	-
Mumbi and her mother	Dependence.	2	2.3	0	-
Mumbi and Karanja	Bribery. Betrayal. Although she was married to Gikonyo, Mumbi had a child with Karanja. Mumbi a symbol for the fertile Kenya. Dependence / Help. Weakness in love. Influence of colonialism.	9	10.3	5	23.8
Mumbi and Gikonyo	Wife and husband. Effect of colonial detention. Marriage—essential relationship. Lack of faith. Symbolic of difficulties in Kenyan society. Support. His punishment of her, culturally and religiously correct. Misunderstanding. Alienation.	39	44.8	17	81
Karanja and Society	Humiliation. Betrayal	0	-	1	4.8
Kihika and other Mau Mau warriors	Unity. Interdependence.	3	3.4	4	19
Kihika and Wambuku	The struggle was greater than personal love. Love can destroy a life. Betrayal.	7	8	0	-
Kihika and Society	Sacrifice for the future.	6	6.9	1	4.8
Kihika and Gikonyo	Friendship	1	1.1	0	-
Kihika and Mugo	Betrayal	1	1.1	0	-

Table continued...

Important Relationship	Reasons	Female	%	Male	%
Gikonyo and Wangari	Mother and son—advice support.	2	2.3	0	-
Mugo and his Aunt	Her abuse and lack of love led him to betray Kihika.	1	1.1	0	-
Mugo and the land	Symbolic and literal	1	1.1	1	4.8
Karanja and Gikonyo	Betrayal	2	2.3	1	4.8
Karanja and the Freedom Fighters and the Colonists	Betrayal for personal benefit	1	1.1	1	4.8
Society and the Politicians	Neo-colonialism	1	1.1	1	4.8
Kenya and the Colonists	People will fight for the love of their country	2	2.3	0	-
The Thompsons	She loved her husband but felt unloved and discontented.	1	1.1	0	-
Margery Thompson and Dr. Van Dyke	Adultery	1	1.1	0	-
Wambui and the male Elders	Acceptance. Shows women can work to make positive changes in society.	1	1.1	0	-
No or inappropriate response		29	33	1	4.8

It can be seen that the students identified a wide range of relationships and their reasons for choosing them varied greatly. Many of the relationships seem to have been chosen because of the manner in which they illustrate the thematic material, for example the relationship between Karanja and Gikonyo portrayed 'betrayal'. Some students chose relationships other than between two individuals such as, Mugo and the land, and described it as important symbolically and literally. The relationship between Kihika and Society, is considered important because it shows his sacrifice for the future and

Kihika's relationship with the other Mau Mau warriors illustrated unity and interdependence.

A large number of both male and female students described the more 'personal' relationships between Gikonyo and Mumbi and Mumbi and Karanja. The symbolism of the characters and their relationships is mentioned and the manner in which they highlight themes such as alienation and betrayal but emphasis is also placed on the personal, e.g. love, faithlessness and misunderstanding.

Only six female and one male student focused on what I consider to be a remarkable relationship between Mumbi and her mother-in-law, Wangari. These two women develop an interdependent and mutually supportive relationship that is a fine example of female solidarity in the face of various forms of male harassment but it is not accorded importance by the respondents to the questionnaire.

#### Question 5 What is your opinion of Gikonyo's treatment of Mumbi?

When Gikonyo returns from detention he finds that in his absence Mumbi, his wife, has had a child by his old friend and rival Karanja. The circumstances of her pregnancy are, to some extent, extenuating but he refuses to discuss the issue with her or with his mother. He alienates Mumbi completely, refusing to sleep with her or talk to her about their affairs. When finally he physically abuses both she and the child she leaves her home and only at the end of the book are there signs of reconciliation and forgiveness. I was interested in how the students viewed this behaviour and divided their reactions into positive, (agreeing with Gikonyo's behaviour) and negative (disagreeing with the way Gikonyo treated Mumbi).

They are shown in table 6.21.

**TABLE 6.21 Responses to Gikonyo's treatment of Mumbi**

RESPONSES	FEMALE	%	MALE	%
Positive	23	26.4	6	28.6
Negative	44	50.6	12	57.1
No or inappropriate response	20	23	3	14.3

In support of their positive responses students wrote such thing as:

1. It was good of him to forgive her in the end.
2. It teaches us to be loyal to our husband.
3. He was right not to sleep with her.
4. She deserved to be punished.
5. She betrayed him.
6. He's been badly hurt and disappointed.
7. It's a good example as he finally forgives her.
8. At least he accepts her back in the end.
9. It was a lesson for her.
10. It provided a chance for her repentance.

Those who had a negative reaction supported their reaction with the following statements:

1. She already realised she had made a mistake.
2. It was undisciplined and dehumanising.
3. He should have listened to her side of the story.
4. It was inhuman—he could have tried to forgive her.
5. He needed to talk to her.
6. It was unfair. He was away a long time and life at home was tough.
7. He was abusive showing how women were oppressed.
8. In life you need to forgive and forget.
9. It was very harsh.
10. Everyone makes mistakes.
11. They should seek a solution together.
12. It would be better to divorce her.
13. You have to accept people's faults if they apologise.
14. He humiliated himself as well as Mumbi.

A high number of students failed to respond, possibly due to shortage of time. However, over half the sample was critical of Gikonyo's behaviour and able to relate to Mumbi's situation and feelings and to suggest ways of solving their difficulties. There remained 27% of the total sample who showed little sympathy for Mumbi's situation throughout her husband's detention and after his release.

**Question 6 What were your feelings about Mumbi's own mother's reaction when Mumbi took her child and returned to her parents?**

Mumbi's mother-in-law, Wangari, is completely supportive of Mumbi and when Gikonyo begins to abuse Mumbi and her child and won't listen to reason, she encourages Mumbi to leave him and to return to her own parents. When Mumbi reaches home her own mother is very reluctant to take her in and criticises her for not being able to take a little beating. I was interested in the student's reactions to this contrast, and particularly to Mumbi's mother's behaviour. I divided the students responses into Positive – those who agreed with her mother's reaction, and Negative – those who were sympathetic to Mumbi and disagreed with her mother's reaction. The responses are shown in table 6.22.

TABLE 6.22 Responses to Mumbi's mother's reaction.

RESPONSES	FEMALE	%	MALE	%
Positive	18	20.7	4	19
Negative	32	36.8	11	52.4
No or inappropriate response	37	42.5	6	28.6

The students who failed to give an appropriate answer mostly failed to give their own reaction. Clearly many did not understand the question or had not given the issue any thought. Those who supported Mumbi's mother in her reaction gave reasons such as:

- Mumbi had misbehaved.
- She had to show Mumbi her duty.
- It was right that she should return to her husband.
- She could be beaten as her mother was.

- She doesn't support divorce.
- She didn't want shame.
- It was according to African tradition.
- It was to teach her.

Those who had a more sympathetic attitude to Mumbi supported their views with the following comments:

- Rebuffing her and blaming her would not solve the problems.
- The mother should have discussed a plan with Mumbi.
- Sad—she didn't understand how Mumbi had suffered,
- The Mother was rude and seemed to find oppression of women fair.
- She didn't try to solve the problem.
- If it were me, I'd expect support from my mother.
- She is wrapped in old beliefs. She is unbelievable! How can you chase away your own daughter?
- I felt sympathy for the child.
- She failed in her role.
- Mumbi needed comfort after Gikonyo's treatment.
- She was too traditional.
- It was the only place she had to go.

It is clear that, although there is a small group of students who commend the mother's behaviour, a much larger group, almost 40% of the respondents, felt sympathy for Mumbi and reacted against her mother's harsh treatment. They realised that there were other, better, ways of attempting to improve the situation.

**Question 7** Did you have any sense of hope for Kenyan society after reading this novel? Explain your answer.

Given the symbolic title, it is possible that, despite the doubts raised by the author, the reader is expected to have some sense of hope for the future of Kenya. I was particularly interested in whether the students, as such close neighbours of Kenya, would have sufficient general knowledge of the current political and social conditions there that this

would impinge upon their answers and in whether they would mention specifically the status of women. I divided their answers into positive, negative and mixed responses and these are shown in table 6.23.

TABLE 6.23 Student's feelings about the future of Kenya after reading "A Grain of Wheat"

STUDENT'S FEELINGS	FEMALE	%	MALE	%
Positive	39	44.8	12	57.1
Negative	25	28.7	6	28.6
Mixed	4	4.6	0	-
No or inappropriate answer	18	20.7	3	14.3

The students who expressed positive feeling explained them with comments such as the following:

- They were starting life afresh.
- They are now free of oppression and exploitation.
- They can now know how to love their own country.
- They seemed highly united.
- Kenyans now live at peace and respect each other.
- The struggle seemed to be successful.
- They got rid of exploitation and racial discrimination.
- The book itself would encourage them to know their past and to look forward.
- Betrayers would recognise their mistakes and repent.
- Kenyans realise they can do things to improve their economic situation.

The negative viewpoint was explained with the following comments:

- The settlers had interfered too much with the society.
- It gave birth to neo-colonialism. The poor were still landless.
- Leaders forgot their promises.
- Evil was continuing.
- Gikonyo's statement "The government has forgotten us.", sums it up.
- At the end of the book everyone is disappointed in some way or other.

- The leaders betrayed the freedom fighters.
- All that is left is disappointment.

These responses show widespread acceptance of the novel as it 'stands alone', however that does not seem to me to be the purpose of including it in the syllabus. I am sure that students are expected to study the book within a wider political and social setting. The positive comments, which rightly affirm self-government, racial equality and more economic power for some Kenyans, show, however, a remarkable lack of knowledge of the current situation in Kenya. Although the book was written over 30 years ago, there are intimations of neo-colonialism and the rapid dissipation of the socialist dream.

One student does identify the power of the book itself to educate people about their past and enable them to look forward but does not seem aware that the writer's attempts to do this led to his detention and exile and the banning of other books written by him (Ngugi 1981). Ngugi says himself in a note at the beginning of the book; "...the situation and the problems are real – sometimes too painfully real for the peasants who fought the British yet who now see all that they fought for being put on one side."

The negative responses show what seems to me to be a more realistic assessment of the tone of the novel's conclusion.. The status of women in the Kenyan society of the future is not found worthy of comment.

### Summary

In this novel Ngugi develops the main female character, Mumbi, in a sensitive manner and, through her, gives a picture of the situation of women in the time and place in Kenya in which the novel is set. The political / historical events which are occurring as a background to the personal dramas are momentous and the novel has several important themes. I found that the students tended to focus on these themes e.g betrayal, oppression, alienation, in quite a theoretical way, for example 'the oppression of the Kenyan people by the colonial government', but had difficulty in dealing with them at a more personal level such as the oppression of black workers such as Kiranja at the research station, or the oppression of women, like Mumbi, within marriage.

Although the students recognised the relationship between Mumbi and Gikonyo as central to the novel, again this seemed to be dealt with in terms of its symbolism rather than through a recognition that they were people with real ideas and problems. Mumbi may well be a symbol for Kenya but she is also a woman in that society and, in my opinion, her situation was not understood and addressed sufficiently by the students. When prompted by the questions, some students did express anger at such things as the fact that Mumbi did not go to school but unprompted, they failed to comment on the gender relations portrayed and the inequalities between men and women. When commenting on Gikonyo's treatment of Mumbi, all but one of the students failed to note the difficulties experienced at home, Mumbi's care of her mother-in-law and her efforts to feed and clothe them while Gikonyo was in detention.

Given that Kenya is their next door neighbour, and that it's current government does not follow socialist policies, students displayed a high level of naivety in their widespread acceptance of the presentation of the political dream and their expectation of its fulfilment.

**“The Trial of Dedan Kimathi”** by Ngugi Wa Thiong’o and Micere Mugo

This play is set in Kenya during the struggle for independence and deals with the activities of the freedom fighters, chiefly Dedan Kimathi, who is tried for being in possession of a fire arm. It is Brechtian in style moving loosely in time and location. Only three, of over 40, characters are female. One is an elderly white woman who appears briefly in a court scene. The other two are major characters but are known only as ‘the woman’ and ‘the girl’.

There were 87 female and 18 male respondents.

**Question 1 Of over 40 characters in the play only three are women. Suggest why this might be.**

The responses to this question were varied and show a wide range of perception from the appropriateness of only having three female characters and the idea that it is the writers' choice, (and therefore not to be questioned) to the assertion that it perpetuates

the myth of women's inferiority and lack of involvement in affairs outside the home. The student's responses are shown in table 6.24

TABLE 6.24 Reasons for there being only three female characters

REASONS FOR ONLY 3 FEMALES	FEMALE	%	MALE	%
It shows the attitudes of society—revolutionary roles were played by men.	0	-	4	22.2
Most women didn't struggle for independence.	14	16.1	0	-
It reflects how women are regarded—backward and not strong enough to engage in danger.	21	24.1	1	5.6
Women were inferior and not allowed to participate.	5	5.7	0	-
The female characters are representative.	5	5.7	1	5.6
It shows that in any society women are seen as inferior and unwilling to participate fully despite their contribution and they are not given the same chances as men.	6	6.9	4	22.2
Women see war as men's responsibility and are more involved in reproductive activities.	9	10.3	1	5.6
Women are cowards and not ready to fight.	0	-	1	5.6
It shows women were not in the front line.	4	4.6	0	-
Women characters couldn't portray the message.	0	-	1	5.6
Women never participated in society but now that is changing. These women showed what they could do.	0	-	4	22.2
Because it is the writers' choice.	1	1.1	0	-
To show that women can engage in the struggle and make changes.	12	13.8	0	-
Women were only partially involved.	5	5.7	0	-
Women are slow and lazy and also oppressed.	2	2.2	0	-
No or inappropriate answer	3	3.4	1	5.6

All of the students who read this play had also read 'A Grain of Wheat' so they should have been aware of the hardships that women suffered during the 'struggle' and the roles which they played, however 32 female students (37%) and 6 male students (33%) completely disregarded this to state that women were not involved and many implied that this was because women are lazy or cowards.

Some students, 11 female and 1 male, noted that women's lack of involvement in the 'front line' was due to their reproductive role in society or because they were not given the same chances as men. The fact that the writers used 'The woman' and 'The girl' to represent all women and all girls was noted by some students but at this stage of the questionnaire this technique was not questioned.

Twelve of the female students suggested that this is a positive treatment of women as it shows that they 'can engage in struggle and make changes'. There was an evident awareness that it reflected the attitudes of the time or ideas about women which are not correct, and a suggestion from the males that these ideas are changing.

#### Question 2 Does it seem a realistic representation of society to you?

There was a problem with this question as many respondents obviously thought that 'it' referred to the play itself rather than the representation of women as I had intended. The responses can be seen in table 6.25

TABLE 6.25 Responses to question 2

RESPONSES	FEMALE	%	MALE	%
Yes, it shows a realistic representation of society.	53	61	5	27.8
Yes, it shows a realistic representation of women in society.	10	11.5	2	11.1
Yes, for that time but it is dated to the time of the struggle against colonialism.	11	12.6	2	11.1
Yes, that's why women are campaigning for their rights in society.	0	-	3	16.7
Yes, but it depends a lot on the kind of message a writer wants to give out.	1	1.1	0	-

*Table continued...*

RESPONSES	FEMALE	%	MALE	%
Yes, because it's a fact that women are cowards.	0	-	1	5.6
Yes, because most women are not involved in war.	0	-	1	5.6
No, it doesn't seem a realistic representation of society.	4	4.6	2	11.1
No, struggles involve everyone as different people have different potentials.	6	6.9	0	-
No, because there are more women than men in society.	1	1.1	0	-
No, this kind of sacrifice is not realistic.	0	-	1	5.6
No or inappropriate answer.	1	1.1	1	5.6

As can be seen, 53 females and 5 males answered without qualification that this seemed a realistic representation of society and only 4 females and 2 males answered a straight no. Other female students qualified their agreement by saying it shows a real representation of women's position in society particularly in African societies at that time. Eight of the males agreed with this with some noting that this is the reason for women's campaign to participate more fully in society. Only 11 females thought it was an unrealistic representation of society and they pointed out that struggles involve everyone and different people have different potential for making contributions. Five of the young men felt it was realistic, noting that few women play active roles in society, even today, women are not involved in war and women are cowards. Only two felt the representation was unrealistic.

### Question 3 What qualities of character are shown by 'the girl' and 'the woman'?

Since these two characters clearly are intended to represent women and youth in Kenya at that time, I was interested in seeing what characteristics the students thought they showed and in comparing male and female responses. The students identified a wide range of positive characteristics, many of them mentioning several.

Table 6.26 shows their responses. I have not separated those referring to the girl from those referring to the woman although some students did this.

TABLE 6.26 Characteristics of the Female Characters

CHARACTERISTICS	FEMALE	%	MALE	%
Brave/ courageous	29	33.3	9	50
Heroic	22	25.3	3	16.7
Outspoken and confident	6	6.9	2	11.1
Strong	12	13.8	3	16.7
Motherly	13	14.9	0	-
Educator / Councillor	17	19.5	3	16.7
Co-operative	5	5.7	0	-
Faithful	1	1.1	1	5.6
Honest	3	3.4	0	-
Liberated	1	1.1	1	5.6
Illiterate	1	1.1	0	-
Tolerant	3	3.4	0	-
Kind	4	4.6	0	-
Wise	4	4.6	0	-
Intelligent	3	3.4	0	-
Stable	3	3.4	1	5.6
Rebellious / Revolutionary	4	4.6	0	-
Patriotic	2	2.2	0	-
Capable	1	1.1	0	-
Mobilizing	4	4.6	0	-
Determined	0	-	2	11.1
Loving	0	-	1	5.6
Responsible	0	-	1	5.6
Helpful	7	8	0	-
Superior	1	1.1	0	-
Generous	0	-	1	5.6

Many respondents mentioned the activities of these two characters, for example the girl was a street child and a prostitute and the woman was a fruit seller, however a large number of qualities of character were noted with their courage, bravery, strength,

heroism and the woman's ability to give council particularly identified by both males and females. The woman's motherly qualities were also recognised by the female students as part of her character.

**Question 4** Most of the other characters have names. On reading the play, did you question the use of 'the girl' and 'the woman' instead of real names?

The fact that these two characters are not given names indicates to me that they are, as the students suggest, representative. Given their positive 'characterisation' and knowledge of the active roles that many women played in the 'struggle' this seemed a rather strange and inadequate treatment of women to me and I was interested in whether the students felt the same way or just accepted it.

Although it was quite feasible to answer yes or no to this question, many students gave their reasons. Their responses are shown in table 6.27

TABLE 6.27 Responses to question 4

RESPONSES	FEMALE	%	MALE	%
No	8	9.2	2	11.1
No, because the characters were representative.	14	16.1	0	-
No, it was to hide their personalities as such heroism was not common.	0	-	1	5.6
Yes	19	21.8	2	11.1
Yes, but the authors use them as representatives of their gender and generation.	10	11.5	13	72.2
Yes, but it was to save confusion.	4	4.6	0	-
Yes, but it is used to show that even women and girls were involved.	3	3.4	0	-
Yes. I think the authors wanted me to relate them to real people I see around.	1	1.1	0	-
Yes, because the writers were generalising the role of women in the struggle.	7	8	0	-
Yes. I think it hides the real situation.	6	6.9	0	-
No or inappropriate answer	15	17.2	0	-

The fact that ‘the woman’ and ‘the girl’ represented their gender, and, in the case of the girl, youth, was widely mentioned but more prevalently among the males where 11 (61%), suggested this as a reason without questioning it. 14 female students, (16%), accepted their use as representatives but 7 questioned this representation and another 6 felt it served to hide the real situation. Some female students questioned this dramatic technique but saw it as a positive thing since it showed that *even* women and girls were involved. There is no suggestion that the students perceive an imbalance or that if the writers are using this technique with the women characters they might apply it to the men as well, presumably because there are so many more men.

#### Question 5 What is the effect of this lack of names?

This question invited students to comment more fully on the lack of real names for the female characters and it brought out some very interesting responses. I suspect the question stimulated some thought on the subject which had not taken place previously. The students’ responses are recorded in table 6.28

TABLE 6.28 The effect of the lack of names for the female characters in “The Trial of Dedan Kimathi”

THE EFFECT OF LACK OF NAMES	FEMALE	%	MALE	%
It is confusing and leads to misunderstanding.	25	28.7	5	27.8
It shows they represent all girls and women.	12	13.8	2	11.1
It shows that women are taken for granted and considered unimportant and men are esteemed in our societies.	3	3.4	1	5.6
It implies that all girls and women have the same characteristics which is not true.	0	-	1	5.6
It is strange as people usually have names.	2	2.2	0	-
It is not pleasant and has a bad effect. It’s degrading.	3	3.4	1	5.6
It leads all women to understand that they have or had a role to play in the struggle for independence.	7	8	4	22.2

*Table continued...*

THE EFFECT OF LACK OF NAMES	FEMALE	%	MALE	%
It makes me identify with them.	2	2.2	0	-
It makes it difficult to know them as people.	1	1.1	0	-
It helps make the message clear. It's easy to identify who is male and who is female.	3	3.4	1	5.6
It shows that women and girls were few in the struggle.	1	1.1	0	-
It makes no sense as they might be considered irrelevant.	0	-	1	5.6
No effect.	4	4.6	0	-
No or inappropriate answer.	24	27.6	2	11.1

Many students noted the fact that it is confusing and leads to misunderstanding although some found the opposite. The students' responses seem to go from one extreme to the other. For example, one male student answered, "It is degrading because even animals have names." And from a female student, "It's not pleasant. It has a bad effect." Others felt, "It leads all women to feel they have a role to play." Or, "It makes me identify with them." The unreal or generalised quality of these characters was noted particularly by the female students, and several male and female students see it as showing women are taken for granted and considered unimportant and irrelevant in African society.

**Question 6 Do you think you and other young women would have shown similar qualities to those of 'the woman' in the same circumstances?**

This question was directed at the female students only and focused on their ability, or lack of it, to identify with 'the woman' and her brave actions. Some students gave reasons for their answers and their responses are shown in table 6.29

*See overleaf:*

TABLE 6.29 Female students' responses to question 6

FEMALE RESPONSES	N <sup>o</sup> .	%
Yes	36	41.4
No	13	14.9
Yes, because it is the role of women to take part in such a struggle.	6	6.9
Some would but others are not strong enough.	12	13.8
Yes, because I am strong and can stand alone.	2	2.2
Yes, because we would all fight for justice and our rights.	5	5.7
Yes, because it is time for changes and women can play a role.	1	1.1
Yes, I would be frightened but I would do my best.	1	1.1
No, because some people fear struggle.	1	1.1
No, but I admire the qualities.	2	2.2
No, because everyone has different qualities.	4	4.6
No. Most women are not courageous.	1	1.1
No or inappropriate answer	3	3.4

Over 50% of the students responded positively and only two suggested, specifically, that women lack courage. Some saw the issues as being greater than those presented directly in the play and said that women would fight for 'justice' and 'their rights'. Two of the male students chose to make a comment and these comments show opposite extremes of thought. From one student—"They couldn't show those qualities as young women are always afraid of being responsible about sensitive issues." And from another—"The time has been reached to understand the importance of women in any society. The idea that they are lazy and inferior is outdated. In this age of science and technology everything that can be done by men can be done by women so of course young women would have the same qualities as 'the woman'.

### Summary

The wide acceptance of the dramatic technique employed by the writers in using 'the woman' and 'the girl' as representatives of their gender and generation and the lack of questioning as to why this technique is not applied to the male characters is disturbing. Some of the rationale presented to support this technique indicates a high level of acceptance and internalisation on the part of the female students of some of society's

ideas about women, for example that they are lazy, lack courage, and can't or shouldn't take part in activities outside the home and simply that their characters can be 'generalised' in this way.

Although many fine qualities possessed by these two characters were identified, few students recognised that this contributed to the unreality, and representational role, of the characters. Some students, particularly as they proceeded with the questionnaire, expressed unease over this treatment of women and, of these, males and females were equally unhappy over the lack of characterisation which they interpreted as demeaning. 59% of the female students thought they and other young women would display similar qualities, (courage, heroism, strength and so on) as 'the woman' in the same circumstances and accepted to fight for their rights and for justice as their role.

#### **"God's Bits of Wood" by Sembene Ousmane**

It was unfortunate and limiting that in all the schools where I administered my questionnaires the sixth form students had studied the same books. Because of my own positive response to the text "God's Bits of Wood", I was anxious to assess the responses of students. I decided, therefore, to administer the questionnaire with two fifth form classes who had studied the book. These classes were at Kilakala Girls' Secondary School, 20 students, and Ilboru Secondary School (boys), 18 students. Both these schools are 'special' schools, as explained in my description of the sample.

I was unable to administer the questionnaire myself so, in the case of Kilakala, it was done by the literature teacher and at Ilboru by the academic master. The respondents, then, were different students to those who answered the other questionnaires. They have all achieved well in the past in order to be attending these schools.

The very full answers given are a fairly clear indication that the students had enjoyed the book and had excellent recall of the content.

**Question 1 Although this novel is about the strike of the railway workers, who are men, the strike involves women too. Explain how three women or groups of women are involved.**

The text concentrates equally on the men's and women's lives and involvement during the strike. I wanted to see if students had recognised the contributions of the women sufficiently well to record them. Table 6.30 shows the results.

TABLE 6.30 **Recollection of women's involvement in the strike.**

RECOLLECTIONS	FEMALE	%	MALE	%
Able to list three women and describe their involvement	20	100	18	100
Not able to list three women and describe their involvement	0	-	0	-

Table 6.31 shows the names and frequency of women mentioned.

TABLE 6.31 **Names of women involved in the strike.**

NAME OF CHARACTER	FEMALE	%	MALE	%
Penda	16	80	16	88.9
Mame Sofi	10	50	11	61
Ramatoulaye	18	90	7	39
Maimouna	13	65	1	5.6
Ad'jibid'ji	1	5	0	-
N'Deye Touti	1	5	0	-
Mariame Sonko	1	5	0	-
Daidia Mbaye	0	-	1	5.6
Dienaba	0	-	1	5.6

The women mentioned were involved in a wide range of activities which supported the strike or involved them in its outcomes in a variety of ways. Major characters like Penda and Ramatoulaye are mentioned most frequently but even the involvement of the child, Ad'jibid'ji, who has to endure her father's long absences and goes to strike meetings with her grandfather, is recognised.

**Question 2 Why was the involvement of the women essential for the success of the strike?**

In my opinion the writer is attempting to show that without the unification of the women and men the strike would not have succeeded. The women are not merely an

adjunct to the activities of the men. The question aims to see if the students perceived this also. Five different areas of female involvement, which were essential to the success of the strike, were identified by the students and are shown in table 6.32. Some students identified more than one.

TABLE 6.32 **Reasons why women's contribution to the strike was essential.**

REASONS	FEMALE	%	MALE	%
To make more impression on the colonial administration. The women's march and the unity of the men and women forced action from the regime and the company.	2	10	5	27.8
The women had to feed the men and take care of the families.	12	60	12	66.7
The women's involvement encouraged and increased the strength of the men.	13	65	7	38.9
Because it was society in general which was being exploited.	1	5	4	22.2
They played many roles such as tending the wounded.	1	5	0	-
No or inappropriate answer.	2	10	0	-

Although there is a wide range of involvements mentioned, there is an emphasis, particularly by the female respondents, on the supportive roles of the women. The women's impetus and individual contribution in holding the march is most widely recognised by the male students who also note more frequently the exploitative nature of the colonial regime.

### Question 3 **Which character did you admire most in the novel?**

In asking this question, I wanted to see if they considered the female characters admirable compared with the male characters and I was interested in the qualities of character which they found admirable. Table 6.33 shows the list of characters identified together with the characteristics most mentioned.

TABLE 6.33 Most Admired Characters

MOST ADMIRABLE CHARACTERS	FEMALE	%	MALE	%
Maimouna: (female) She managed to contribute despite her disability.	3	15	1	5.6
Ramatoulaye: (female) Courageous: Fearless in caring for her family: Responsible: Rose to the occasion: Overcame her fear and became a leader.	4	20	2	11.1
Penda: (female) She knew about and struggled for her rights: Strong: Confident: Courageous: Cheerful: Brave: Prepared to die to achieve rights for others.	3	15	4	22.2
Bakayoko: (the main character—male) Selflessly committed: Strong: Courageous: Selfless in seeking a better life for the whole of society: Very good leader: Educated: Serious: Determined.	4	20	7	38.9
N'Deye Touti: (female) Clean: Smart: Educated: Disliked polygamy.	2	10	0	-
Ad'jibid'ji: (female child) Strong: Conscientious: Enquiring; A 'new breed' against the evils in society: Intelligent and wanting to learn more.	1	5	2	11.1
Mame Sofi: (female) She can speak her mind.	2	10	0	-
Doudai: (male) Uncorrupted: A good leader: A good example then and now.	1	5	1	5.6
Le Blanc: (male, European) Went against his own people to support the Africans in their struggle.	0	-	1	5.6

As can be seen, the students admired a wide variety of characters. The qualities which seem important to them are knowledge, confidence and courage and being able to stand up for one's rights. Selfless commitment to others was also noted and the ability to overcome fear or disability.

Predictably, a high number of male students admired the major male character, Bakayoko, who is indeed admirable for his socialist idealism, his intelligence and his selfless commitment, but is also shown as unable to commit himself to a deep personal relationship with any individual. He is a 'loner'. The female students, while admiring Bakayoko, ranged more widely in their preferences. Only two male characters were mentioned, apart from Bakayoko, but this may have been influenced by the previous two questions focusing the student's attention on the female characters. Despite her

strength and the leading role she plays in the novel, Penda is chosen by only 3 female students. This may be due to the fact that she is a prostitute a fact which possibly affected the answers to the next question as well.

**Question 4 Did you identify with this or any other character in the novel?**

In asking this question I was endeavouring to find out which characters and qualities of character the students identified with, whether there was a strong gender link and why they felt the identification. Table 6.34 lists the characters with whom students identified and the most common reasons given.

**TABLE 6.34 Characters with whom Students Identified and Reasons Given.**

<b>CHARACTERS IDENTIFIED REASONS GIVEN</b>	<b>FEMALE</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>MALE</b>	<b>%</b>
Mame Sofi: She's able to speak up in front of men. She fights for her rights. Like her, I'm always reminding people of their responsibilities. She was tired of being oppressed and suppressed. She was strong and able to mobilise her husband –I'd like to have that strength.	5	25	1	5.6
Ramatoulaye: I can also act like a man if I have to. I'm also not afraid of struggling for my society's rights.	2	5	1	5.6
N'Deye Touti: Though she had a western education, finally she followed her own culture. Like her, I create an imaginary world—I don't feel connected with my own environment.	2	10	0	-
Assitan: She is docile and submissive and cares for her family. She is hard working.	2	10	0	-
Bakayoko: Because I am a class leader and need to fight for the rights of others. I'd like to have his strength—I agree with how he acted, abandoning his family for the good of society. Like him, I don't agree with exploitation or oppression and I won't stand by and see it.	1	5	5	27.8
LeBlanc: Because of his socialist ideas.	0	-	2	11.1
Ad'jibid'ji: Like her I always want to learn more from my elders.	0	-	1	5.6
No or inappropriate answer	8	40	8	44.4

The high number of students who either failed to answer the question or gave inappropriate answers leads me to believe that many students didn't understand the wording of the question and I was not there to explain it.

It can be seen that two males identified with female characters, one with Ramatoulaye, due to her strength and audacity in fighting for her rights, and one with Ad'jibid'ji, who went to school and in many ways was more like a boy child in African society than a girl. Only one female student identified with a male character and this was on the basis of the student's role as a student leader.

Significantly, the submissive and traditional, Moslem wife of Bakayoko, Assitan, does not appear in the list of admired characters but two of the female students identified with her. Both Maimouna, the blind woman, and Penda, the strong young woman who led the march, but was also a prostitute, were admired characters for the qualities they displayed but no students identified with them.

Question 5: On page 33 ( Zimbabwe Publishing House 1984 Edition) it says:

**“The days passed...And seeing the burdened shoulders, the listless walk, the women became conscious that a change was coming for them as well.”**

The strike took place in 1947/8. Do you feel that the changes predicted for women have taken place in Africa in the last 50 years?

Because it seems to me that women in Africa, particularly rural Africa, have a long way to go to achieve gender equality, and that the expectations of change portrayed in this text have not been fulfilled, I wanted to test the students' assessment of the changes and achievements. Their responses are shown in table 6.35.

TABLE 6.35 Assessment of Changes in the Status of Women in Africa

ASSESSMENT OF CHANGES	FEMALE	%	MALE	%
Agree that the changes have taken place	12		9	50
Disagree – Consider changes have not taken place	0	-	2	11.1
Feel that the changes have taken place partially	4	20	3	16.7
No or inappropriate answer	4	20	3	16.7

The female students made such comments as:

- “Now women are expressing themselves and have their own meetings to address their rights e.g. Beijing.”
- “Women are no longer submissive. They are more strong and courageous.....but not all.”
- “Some women are top leaders in government but women are still exploited in many societies in Africa.”

Although no female students said they did not feel the changes had taken place, they did express some reservations.

On the whole, the male students felt that changes had taken place and were continuing to do so. They noted that women now contest presidential elections and belong to the world-wide women’s movement and that society is trying to get rid of outdated traditions such as female circumcision. One male student maintained that “the subordination and exploitation of women, stemming from the paternalism of the whites has continued.”

#### Question 6 Part 1: In what ways is N’Deye Touti’s education failing her?

N’Deye Touti has received a very colonial education which has caused problems for her as a young woman in her society. I was interested in whether the students perceived and identified these problems.

The problems they identified are shown in table 6.36. Some students identified more than one problem.

TABLE 6.36 Problems with N’Deye Touti’s Education

PROBLEMS	FEMALE	%	MALE	%
Alienation within her society.	14	70	4	22.2
It gave her a feeling of superiority.	2	10	4	22.2
She came to dislike African culture.	14	70	8	44.4
It was irrelevant to her society.	3	15	2	11.1
It made her selfish.	1	5	2	11.1
She lives in a dream world.	1	5	0	-
She couldn’t use it to help her society.	0	-	5	27.8
No or inappropriate answer	0	-	1	5.6

The answers emphasise strongly how important it is to these students to 'fit into' society and, particularly for the males, to utilise one's education for the good of society. That N'Deye Touti's French colonial education prevents her from doing this is perceived as a problem by the readers as well as the writer.

**Question 6 Part 2: Does your education fail to meet your specific needs in any way?**

Having focused on N'Deye Touti's education, I wanted to see how the students related their ideas to themselves. All the students responded to this question and their comments about their own education are shown in table 6.37

TABLE 6.37 Responses to Question 6 Part 2

RESPONSES	FEMALE	%	MALE	%
Yes	4	20	2	11.1
No	13	65	14	77.8
Uncertain	3	15	1	5.6

Being among the limited few who receive an upper secondary education, these students could well compare themselves with N'Deye Touti. Many female students commented positively, e.g. "I'm not alienated from other girls in my village and I'm able to give helpful advice.", and, "My education is reasonably relevant to my environment.", and, "It helps me to know my rights and particularly literature has shown that I have to be independent (of men)." Also, "I've learnt much about life and how to solve problems." However, four of the students felt isolated from their former friends who "think educated girls are snobs and just trying to be like Europeans."

The male students were mainly positive saying such things as, "It maintains my culture and fits me for my future life." One felt it is too early to tell and another that it is up to him to use it well. Three students did wonder if it would prepare them for employment.

**Question 7 What difference, if any, did you find between this and other novels on the course?**

I see this text as different to others on the course because of its positive images of women. In general the women are shown as strong and decisive, capable of taking part in public life and contributing, together with men, to the betterment of their society. I wanted to see if this was also the perception of the students.

Only one student failed to respond to this question and, on the whole, it was answered very fully. The female students clearly had studied 'A Grain of Wheat' by Ngugi wa Thiong'o and their comparisons were exclusively with this book. The male students had read more widely and made comparisons with. 'Is It Possible?' (a fourth form text), 'A Grain of Wheat', 'Things Fall Apart', 'African Child', 'The Beautiful Ones are not Yet Born', 'A Man of the People', 'Petals of Blood' and 'Song of Lawino'. Table 6.38 shows the differences identified by the students.

TABLE 6.38 Differences between this and other books on the course.

DIFFERENCE	FEMALE	%	MALE	%
It shows women are able to participate in any struggle. They can change things and be leaders.	9	45	5	27.8
This book showed people fighting for an improved life rather than independence.	2	10	3	16.7
In this book traditions and leaders are challenged.	0	-	2	11.1
The location (West Africa) is different.	0	-	5	27.8
The language and style are different.	0	0	3	16.7
It is more relevant than other books, dealing with people's basic needs.	0	-	1	5.6
Women are not despised in this book.	0	0	1	5.6
There is a strong sense of unity and little betrayal.	1	5	1	5.6
The people overwhelm the oppressor.	0	-	2	11.1
Women's work is shown to be not only in the kitchen but also in society.	1	5	0	-
The colonists were French rather than English.	1	0	0	-
No response	1	0	0	-
No difference	6		0	-

Students also noted that the themes of this book and others they had studied, such as 'A Grain of Wheat', are similar and mentioned exploitation and oppression. Six female students were unable to identify any difference.

Asked what they felt about the differences, several of the female students noted feeling encouraged as women by the actions and participation of the women in this novel. E.g. "I can also do anything and men should stop oppressing us and making us stay five steps behind." "I can also involve myself in the struggle for rights, contributing my ideas and effort."

### Summary

Because the questionnaire on 'God's Bits of Wood' was administered with different students to those used for the other three books, comparisons are not totally valid, however the students did come from two of the sample schools and were taught by the same teachers as those from the larger group. The full and detailed nature of the answers given and the high level of response (apart from question 4 which I feel many students did not understand) indicates a high level of involvement by the students and relevance of the material.

All the students were able to list accurately three of the female characters and to describe their roles in the action of the novel. Nine different characters were mentioned and the student's description of their involvement in the strike showed their recognition that contributions could be various and were not just made by the leaders or by the striking men. They recognised the pressure which could be brought to bear by men and women unifying in their struggle against oppression, although there was still a significant number (over 50%) who described the women's activities in terms of support for the men.

Nine characters were listed again when the students were asked to identify the character they most admired and these students seemed better able to focus on the qualities of a character than the main target group. For example, Penda was admired by seven students for her strength, courage, bravery, cheerfulness, confidence and sacrifice and no one mentioned that she was a prostitute.

Four female and seven male students most admired Bakayoko, the leading male character, and two other male students chose male characters, however half the male students identified female characters as those most admired.

The qualities for which students admired the characters were those of Penda, which I have already mentioned, plus ability to overcome difficulties, responsibility, leadership, selfless commitment to the cause, intelligence, determination, an enquiring mind, lack of corruption and respect for rights. In this text, unlike others on the course, these qualities were portrayed by the female characters as well as the males.

Confidence is recognised as an important quality and, when asked which character they identified with, five of the female students chose Mame Sofi because of her ability to speak up for herself in front of men and to fight for her rights. Only one (out of 12) female students identified with a male character, Bakayoko, while three (out of 18) male students identified with female characters. The reasons given by the female students for the identification are quite personal e.g. “Like her I create an imaginary world.” And, “I can also act *like a man* if I have too.” (my italics) The male students tended to identify on the basis of more abstract ideas e.g. “Like him, I don’t agree with exploitation and oppression.” And, “Because of his socialist ideas.”

I gained the impression that Sembene’s predictions of change for women had not been given much attention in the study of this novel. Over half the students felt the changes had taken place, but there was some recognition that although many women are now in leadership roles, exploitation of women within African societies still exists. There was no mention of the status of women in Tanzania. The male students seem more aware that it is a continuing process with much progress yet to be made.

The inappropriateness of a colonial (French) education is a focus of the novel and the young woman, N’Deye Touti, is the chief example of its product. The students were able to perceive the difficulties this caused for a young woman operating in a largely traditional society and to identify a number of problems. Chief among these were the alienation from her society which it caused and the manner in which a Western culture was favoured over her own. Again the male students focused on her social role and saw her education as failing to fit her to “help her society”. The female students commented that she was unable to relate to the other women in her extended family group. It is interesting to note, however, that she was ‘admired’ for her smartness and cleanliness.

Her beauty, which is emphasised in the novel, is not mentioned by the students and no student suggested that she didn't need an education. Most students didn't feel they were in the same situation as N'Deye Touti since their education respects their culture and fits them to take up roles within their society which clearly is very important to them. Although some female students do feel alienated from other, uneducated, women, the male students doubts were centred more around their ability to use their education to gain employment.

Apart from six female students who were unable to identify differences between this book and others they had studied, the students showed a good appreciation of the differences. Half of the female students who responded noted the positive images of women portrayed in the text and they went on to write positively about this and its effect on them. The male students were more analytical mentioning differences in setting and language however they too noted that "Women changed things and showed that not only men can be leaders." And, "In this book women are not despised."

#### General Summary:

The responses to the first questionnaire indicate to me that the students in the survey sample have a very limited background in reading and exposure to books. Many had read nothing else in the past two years and no one appeared to have been following a systematic and varied reading programme. Lack of time, lack of books, and a perceived lack of value for such a reading programme, within society, are all contributing factors to this.

The student's approach to the set texts is, therefore, limited by this lack of exposure to other books in English which makes it difficult for them to make comparisons. It is hard to 'judge' a book when one has nothing to compare it to. Added to this is their lack of grounding in literature study which would have given them the analytical skills needed to study literature at this level.

All literature students are dependent on their teachers to some degree but, although I was unable to carry out classroom observations, I feel that the style of teaching in Tanzania, for understandable reasons, is geared towards good exam results and emphasises the transfer of information and the teacher's interpretation of the texts rather than the development of analytical skills and personal responses to, and interpretation

of, the texts.

As mentioned in chapter four, Michael Hanne (1994) writes of the way in which literature may..... “perform a positive, empowering and liberating role and act as an impetus to change”, but Walter Ruff (1973) suggests that, “defying a stereotype is difficult because first the reader needs the skills to recognise it. The process of identification is, in itself, a process of consciousness raising.”

There is some evidence of this ‘raised consciousness’ and ‘empowerment’ in the sample students responses to the texts, but very little. In general their responses indicate an acceptance of the writer’s views and the literature teacher’s interpretation of them. The stereotypical images of women and of gender relations which are such a feature of three of the literature texts studied are not identified and, presumably, internalised by many students. The choice of literature to be studied becomes extremely important, and a curriculum development issue, in such circumstances.

## CHAPTER 7

### CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Traditionally in Tanzania gendered education was undertaken by parents and other relatives in order to inculcate young people in the ways of society and to instruct them in the various practical skills which would enable them to play a useful role within that society. Contact with Arab traders from as early as the thirteenth century led to the introduction of the Islamic religion and, in the areas where it took hold, the establishment of Koranic schools. Later, Christian missionaries and the colonial administration of Germany introduced western style education the aim of which was to 'civilize' the indigenous people through the teachings of Christianity and the adoption of German culture and to provide educated manpower sufficient to fulfil the needs of the administration. After the First World War the British administration continued in a similar fashion. During this time very few girls received a formal education and few women ventured into the urban centres. The colonial education system underwent various changes but none of these were in response to the needs of the local people.

After Independence, in 1962, a primary focus of the new Socialist government was education for all with equality of access regardless of gender, ethnicity, or relative wealth. Prevailing discriminatory attitudes such as the view that girls did not need an education beyond primary school, or it was a poor investment for families as girls would marry and join other families, continued to mitigate the advancement of girls into higher education however.

In the first two decades after Independence significant advances were made in adult education and towards the achievement of Universal Primary Education but, for philosophical and economic reasons, few young people, particularly girls, went on to secondary school or university. The introduction of private secondary schools helped to supplement what the government was able to provide, and continues to do so, however in most of these schools the quality of education is limited by the lack of all resources.

Throughout the 'Cold War' period the president of Tanzania, Julius Nyerere, maintained a non-aligned stance, however, the economic base of the Socialist Government was seriously undermined during the 70s and 80s by domestic problems

and the world economic recession. This eventually resulted in the government's decision to borrow money for its current account and consequently to undertake the introduction of 'Stabilization Packages' and 'Structural Adjustment Programmes' with their emphasis on lowering inflation, raising productivity and increasing government efficiency through reforms effected in the civil service. The negative effect of these measures on societies, and in particular on women and the poor, has now been widely documented and accepted.

The current situation of women in Tanzania has evolved due to three major factors.

- The effects of a traditional, patriarchal society
- The effects of successive patriarchal and paternalistic colonial administrations
- The effect of SAPs on social services and in widening the gap between rich and poor

A gendered division of labour continues to exist with women undertaking almost all reproductive work and, particularly in the rural areas, much of the production as well. In rural and urban areas many women are forced to undertake additional economic activities in order to attempt to compensate for loss of real income.

Women continue to be under-represented in government and decision making positions. They lack access to land in their own right, access to resources such as financial loans and technology, equality in law, adequate health care for themselves and their families and access to the training and education which would prepare them for public decision making roles and enable them to change their situation for the good. Women remain a vulnerable, marginalized group that is yet to enjoy equality of status and equal access to the nation's resources and services with males.

Strong links have been made between education and development, (Boserup 1970:119; Newland 1979 in Sohoni 1995: 97; Sweetman 1998: 4) and it has long been considered necessary, if women are to contribute equally with men, to the development of the nation that they have equal access to education. Education of women has a positive effect in enhancing their status and self-esteem, in lowering fertility and infant and maternal deaths and in ensuring that the next generation of girls attend school.

Access to education, which is generally measured by enrolment figures, is not sufficient, however, to instigate change. What happens within the school is equally, if

not more, important. In Tanzania, girls need to counteract a male oriented school climate where expectations of them are low, they receive less attention than boys and limiting subject choices are frequently prescribed. For example girls are encouraged into areas such as Home Economics and away from Technology and Science with subsequent limiting effects on their further education and future employment. Gender bias in other areas of the curriculum also contributes to the disadvantages experienced by girls. School text books have been shown to portray limiting and old fashioned images of girls and women and, to a certain extent, to ignore their existence, while portraying positive images of boys and men as being progressive, powerful and in control of themselves and their world (Kaligula in Brock-Utne and Katunzi 1990: Mbilinyi and Omari 1998).

Not only do girls consciously or unconsciously internalise these images, they also become disengaged from an education system which seems not to cater for them and within which they are made to feel that they cannot succeed. The attitudes and demands of society combine with the school 'culture' to create the low self-esteem in female students observed and recorded by a number of researchers (Sumra and Katunzi 1991; Kassimoto 1998; Mbilinyi, M 1990; Omari and Mosha 1987).

Adolescence is a particularly important period for the development of self concept and schools can play a constructive role by giving careful attention to the part that curriculum can play in enhancing self-esteem. Despite United Nations calls for "the elimination of all stereotyped concepts of the roles of men and women at all levels and in all forms of education.....in particular, by the revision of text books and school programmes and the adaptation of teaching methods" (UN 1979), and the identification of gender bias in the curriculum of Tanzanian schools with recommendations that it be eliminated, little has been done at this stage to counter this negative effect on girls' education and development.

School students' reading material is not confined to text books. In primary school, children are exposed to supplementary readers and in secondary school the study of literature in Swahili and English is introduced. The emotional and intellectual experience of reading this literature and its strong conscious or unconscious socialising force should not be underestimated or go unexplored.

Research carried out in the industrialised world showed that the gender based

stereotypes to which young students are introduced through text books are reinforced by the literature they study in secondary school (Taylor 1980: Ruff 1973). Along with the negative images of girls and women noted, researchers observed, in particular, the absence of female characters and the absence of alternative possibilities for girls and women.

Howard Klein (1968 in Taylor 1980) found that girls and boys react differently to the same content. For boys the prime factor in determining the appeal of a book was the occupation of the main character. Second to this was the sex of that character. For girls the prime factor was the sex of the main character. His study confirmed that both boys and girls prefer to read about characters of their own sex and showed that both girls and boys perform with greater efficiency when reading materials they specifically enjoy. They do not perform well when their interest is not aroused.

If the study of literature is to contribute to the goals of education and the objectives of secondary education in Tanzania and to enhance the self-esteem of all students it needs to meet the needs of young women as well as those of young men. My research was aimed at discovering if this is the case.

In the initial part of my research I read the books listed in the fiction section of the A level Literature in English Syllabus from which literature teachers choose the books which the students will study. I made a close analysis of the eight books, which I was advised by teachers were the most frequently studied, on the basis of the images of women and the gender relations portrayed. As none of the books on the list are written by women, it was clear from the outset that the students are subjected only to the views and opinions of men. As an example of male bias in the curriculum this potentially has a far reaching effect on both male and female students and my close analysis of the books bore this out.

Publication dates of the books go from 1962 –1977; the period when a body of ‘African’ literature was emerging, immediately after the struggles for, and gaining of, Independence. Apart from the play, ‘The Lion and the Jewel’, they share the themes listed by Adeola James. (1990)

1. The devastating effect of Africa’s contact with Europe.
2. The rehabilitation of Africa’s cultural heritage to mitigate, heal or correct some of the injuries inflicted by colonization

3. Conflict between the traditional world and the modern world—polygamy, infidelity, corruption and abuse of power.

My close analysis of the eight books and study of the others was aimed at answering the first of my research questions:

- What images of women are created by the set texts in the A level English syllabus?

The analysis shows that many of the texts have in common the images of women which they portray. In general women are shown as:

1. marginal to the affairs of men, that is, the important issues of life.
2. subordinate and submissive to the wishes of men.
3. unworthy of the respect of men.
4. decorative possessions to enhance the status of men.
5. providers of the needs of men.
6. traditional / unprogressive.

Or, alternatively, as didactic heroines whose function within the novel denies them psychological development. In general their relationships with men are prescribed by patriarchal hierarchy and reinforce their oppression and their denial of human rights within their societies.

The question must be asked; is this literature helping to fulfil the goals of Tanzanian education, as laid down by the government, or the objectives of Secondary Education such as the development of personal identity, integrity and self-confidence, recognition of human rights and the preparation of students for tertiary study and the world of work? Regrettably, I must say; no it is not. Almost all the literature reinforces the status quo for male students, presenting them with an extremely limited challenge to this and few role models likely to encourage them to question the dictates of patriarchal society or to motivate any change in their acceptance of their 'given' role within it. Female students are even more poorly served by these book choices. They are subjected to the marginalisation of women from all the 'important' areas of life, their lack of personal expression and insignificance within society and an almost unquestioning acceptance of their role as second rate citizens. There are few positive role models to encourage them

or to instigate any belief that women can overcome this oppression and achieve something for themselves and their society.

The exception to this analysis is Sembene Ousmane's novel, "God's Bits of Wood", which shows an unusual recognition of women's value, important place in society and ability to contribute equally with men to the affairs of that society. It offers unprecedented, (in comparison with the other seven texts) positive images of women and numerous opportunities for discussion about, and comment on, issues of political and religious oppression of women and men.

My second and fourth research questions could well have been combined and consequently I will deal with them together in my conclusions.

- What are the possible effects of such images on female students?
- Do the students internalise the images of women? If so, what are the possible long term effects of this?

Klein (1968) and Hanne (1994) maintain that students do internalise the images presented to them in the stories they read and the results of my research questionnaires, which were aimed at ascertaining the students' reaction to the representation of women and gender relations bore this out.

The results of the questionnaire based on the novel, *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born*, show evidence of considerable acceptance of the negative images of women and of gender relations depicted in the novel by both male and female students. Over a third of the students found it acceptable to present the story from a totally male point of view, to use the main female character to generalise all that is bad in society and to assume her ideas and concerns can be expressed by her husband. Her genuine problems were perceived by very few students and even when acknowledged it was usually in terms of how she should, and could, overcome them without letting them impinge on her relationship with her husband or succumbing to the effects of 'Western Imperialism'. Almost half the students accepted, without question, the author's negative depiction of her.

The narrator's (or author's) extraordinarily negative descriptions of women's behaviour when their men are at war were agreed with by 20.5% of female students and 35% of male students. The behaviour of males in times of war is not questioned by the author

and only one student, a male, noted this. When asked if they accepted this description of women's behaviour there was a considerably higher percentage of students who found it unacceptable. I suspect that the manner in which the questionnaire focused their attention on this aspect of the novel provoked some questioning that had not taken place previously. 51 out of the 73 female students said they would not behave in the manner described.

Asked to note descriptions of women and their behaviour in the novel, the students identified a wide variety of negative descriptions. In almost all cases the descriptions are stated as accepted facts e.g. "Women are untruthful, dealing artificially with their husbands." And, "Women are never satisfied." In five cases, (all female) the respondents observed that this was the author's portrayal e.g. "Women are portrayed as people who value money and despise their culture."

'The Man' was admired and related to by 41% of female students and 52% of males, due to his personal qualities and his stand against corruption. Only seven students, one a male, admired a female character which is not surprising given the characterisation of females in the novel but it raises the question of the value of the novel and its study for female readers.

Ngugi wa Thiong'o has created strong female characters in each of his novels studied on the A level Literature course. How they are perceived by the readers in relation to the historical and thematic material and in the context of the literature class was of interest to me.

Asked to identify the main issue of *A Grain of Wheat*, 50.5% of female students and 57% of male students identified 'the fight for independence / freedom'. A high number of male students, 33.3%, as opposed to 11.5% of female students, identified 'betrayal and alienation'. The female students identified a wide range of issues and almost a quarter, but only one male, mentioned 'sacrifice - the symbolic significance of the title'.

To relate the characters and the issues, I asked students to choose characters and to describe the way in which they are affected by the issue. Types of effects identified were, political, historical and emotional with male students identifying historical effects above all. Despite the profound effects of the struggle for independence over a prolonged period of time, on the main female character, Mumbi, the majority of students chose young male characters who were active in the struggle or detained by

the colonial administration. 60% of females and 71% of males chose Kihika, a martyr to the cause who is killed quite early in the novel. Mumbi's daily struggle clearly is not seen to be as interesting or important as the lives of the young men who are more directly involved with the enemy. Nor did the discrimination against her in terms of education initially elicit a negative reaction from respondents. It was clear, from reaction in the classrooms, that this fact had not been noted particularly in the study of the novel. Almost half of the male and female students noted, when asked, that girls were considered inferior and not sent to school in those days and their education was not considered a good investment for parents. The student's reaction to Mumbi's lack of education varied from acceptance that, "it was just the system at the time", to a reaction against all gender discrimination with a high proportion of both males and females claiming that "women have the right to education", as one might expect from students at this level.

Personal relationships are a significant element of this novel and, asked to identify two which they considered important, 45% of female students and 81% of male students identified the relationship between Mumbi and her husband, Gikonyo, noting its symbolic function in the novel (the difficulties of partnership in Kenyan society), the effect of colonial detention on their relationship, the essential nature of marriage, misunderstanding and alienation. Mumbi's relationships with Karanja, the father of her child, her brother Kihika and her mother-in-law are all identified. Some female students identified other relationships involving female characters but no other females are mentioned by the male students. The young man, Kihika, is prominent and relationships such as that between Society and the Politicians are also mentioned. The relationship between Mumbi and her Mother-in-law, Wangari, noted by 7% of females and 5% of males is a mutually supportive and interdependent one which is a fine example of female solidarity in the face of various forms of male harassment but is accorded little importance by the students.

Gikonyo's refusal to discuss their situation with Mumbi on his return from prison and his behaviour towards her, which I considered oppressive and irrational is approved of by 26% of the female students and 29% of the male students. Approximately 50% of all students reacted against Gikonyo's treatment of Mumbi. Her own mother is very unforgiving and accepts Mumbi extremely reluctantly when she leaves her husband and returns to her parents' home. Over 20% of male and female students approved of her

mother's behaviour and backed their approval up with such ideas as; "she should be beaten as her mother was", showing an extraordinary lack of empathy for Mumbi or appreciation of the hardships she has endured and the contributions she has made to her own and her husband's families. Over 40% of male and female students however, felt sympathy for Mumbi and reacted against her mother's harsh treatment. They realised there were other, better ways of attempting to improve the situation.

Despite Ngugi's sensitive development of the main female character, Mumbi, many students had difficulty in empathising with her. They readily recognised her symbolic function in the novel but her value in illustrating the situation of women in living, active Kenyan society seems to be overlooked by many students and superseded by the activities of the male characters and the political concerns of the novel. I suspect that answering the questionnaire focused student's attention on this character and raised issues which their study had not.

Student reaction to the questionnaire based on *The Trial of Dedan Kimathi* reflected the responses already noted to Ngugi's novel. Asked to give possible reasons for the writers' inclusion of only three female characters in a cast of over forty, portraying aspects of the struggle for independence, the respondents showed widespread acceptance that these characters, (in fact, only two; *The Girl and The Woman*) could represent all women in Kenya or that women's inferiority excluded them. Despite the fact that they should have known better, having read 'A Grain of Wheat', 37% of female students and 33% of male students claimed that women were not involved in the struggle for independence and many implied that this was because women were lazy or cowards. Some students, approximately 30% male and female, were sufficiently analytical to state that it reflected the attitudes of society – that women are seen as inferior and unwilling to be involved despite the reality. Some students, 14% female and 22% male, felt that these characters were used to show that women can be involved and play their part in any struggle. There was an evident awareness that the play reflected the attitudes of its time or ideas about women which are not correct and a suggestion from male students that these ideas are changing. This dichotomy of ideas was evident also in relation to whether or not this imbalance of characters was a realistic representation of society. Over 70% of female students and 40% of male students felt that it was, although some pointed out that this is why women are now fighting for their rights. Of those students, mainly female, who felt three female characters out of forty

did not show a realistic representation of society the points were made that; “struggles involve every one as different people have different potentials” and, “there are more women than men in society”.

In assessing the qualities of character of ‘the Girl’ and ‘the Woman’, students identified a wide range of positive characteristics with bravery, (33% of females and 50% of males) heroism, (22% of females and 17% of males) and strength, (14% of females and 17% of males) featuring prominently. Only female students noted certain qualities, using such descriptions as; motherly, cooperative, honest, tolerant, kind, wise, revolutionary. The ability of the students to identify these qualities seems at odds with their earlier descriptions of women’s place in society, women’s cowardliness and women’s unwillingness to take part in the struggle, however these later attitudes emerged again when the students responded to the fact that the women have no names. 26% of female students and 16% of male students accepted this due to the representational nature of the female characters. Of those who questioned this dramatic technique, most rationalised it or saw it as a positive thing as it showed that even women and girls were involved. There was no suggestion that the students perceive an imbalance or that the writers might apply the same technique to the male characters, presumably because there are so many more men.

As with a number of questions in the other questionnaires, I suspect that my question asking students to comment on the effect of the lack of names for the female characters stimulated thinking and criticism which had not taken place previously. The responses were varied, ranging from; “It’s not pleasant and has a bad effect. It is degrading.”, to, “It leads all women to understand that they have, or had, a role to play in the struggle for independence.” 14% of female students and 11% of male students felt that it shows that they represent all girls and women and a small number of males and females noted that, “It shows women are taken for granted and considered unimportant and men are esteemed in our societies.”

Almost 60% of female students thought that they and other young women would display similar qualities (courage, heroism, strength etc) as the ‘Woman’, and accepted to fight for their rights and justice as their role.

I have already mentioned in the Documentary Review that I see the novel *God’s Bits of Wood* as offering a number of positive images of women. It is unfortunate that the

questionnaire on this novel was administered to different students than those on the other three texts. The students answering this questionnaire were all in 'Special Schools' whereas the original sample group were chosen as a wider cross section of sixth form students. It is notable that these students made very full answers indicating that they had excellent recall of the content and had enjoyed studying the book.

In this novel the writer treats the lives and activities of men and women with equal emphasis and students were all able to recall, name and describe the contribution to the strike action of three women. In all, nine women were mentioned, all women who were major characters and involved in the strike. Students also recognised the essential nature of women's involvement in the strike action and identified the ways in which they contributed. However a high proportion of female students identified women's supportive roles e.g. "The women had to feed the men and take care of the families" and "the women's involvement encouraged and increased the strength of the men". While male students acknowledged these roles, they noted in particular the political effect of the women's action in staging the march.

The students admired a wide variety of characters. The qualities which seem important to them are knowledge, confidence and courage and being able to stand up for one's rights. Selfless commitment to others was also noted and the ability to overcome fear or disability. All these characteristics could be seen in this novel.

Predictably, Bakayoko, the very admirable, male main character was most admired by 39% of male students and 20% of female students, but, interestingly, 50% of the male students most admired a female character. Only one female student most admired a male character other than Bakayoko and this was due to his lack of corruption. The list of characters with whom the students identified varied slightly from those most admired. The male students tended to identify on the basis of political idealism while many of the female students identified with characters who had the strength to fight against oppression, wanting to be like them. 10% of female students identified with Assitan, Bakayoko's submissive and docile wife who is not directly involved in the strike action but endures her husband's long absences uncomplainingly, and 10% identified with N'Deye Touti, the young women caught between the traditional and modern worlds. Only one female student identified with a male character. She did this on the basis of her role as a student leader.

The novel, set in 1947/8, suggests that changes are taking place which will alter the lives of women. 60% of female students and 50% of males thought that the changes had taken place, partially. The comments of the female students did show some reservations however, e.g. "Women are no longer submissive. They are more strong and courageous.....but not all." And, "Some women are top leaders in government but women are still exploited in many societies in Africa."

The students responding to this questionnaire, particularly the males, had read a number of other texts including "A Grain of Wheat" and "The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born" and, apart from 6 female students, they were able to make constructive, comparative comments. One significant difference identified by the students was that; "This book shows women are able to participate in any struggle. They are able to change things and be leaders." (45% of female students and 28% of male students.)

Hanne (1994: 11) claims that, "Literature may perform a positive, empowering and liberating role and act as an impetus to change." However Ruff (1973: 8) points out that defying a stereotype in literature is difficult because first the reader needs the skills to recognise it. I suggest that the three texts, "The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born", "A Grain of Wheat" and "The Trail of Dedan Kimathi" present negative, stereotyped images of women and / or society's perception of women and of gender relations and that many of the sixth form readers who responded to my questionnaire lacked the skills and experience as readers to recognise this. It is apparent that this issue is not high in the priorities of literature teachers. The lack of questioning of stylistic devices and dramatic techniques, which serve to undermine the value of women and to 'generalize' their feelings, experiences and opinions, and their widespread acceptance is disturbing. While some students do perceive and question the portrayal of women and gender relations in these texts, there is ample evidence that many female, and male, students sub-consciously internalise these images which serve to reinforce images and stereotypes to which they have been exposed over a long period of time such as that women are lazy, lack courage, and can't or shouldn't take part in activities outside the home. In turn, this contributes to the low self-esteem of female students observed by Sumra and Katunzi, (1991: 56) and noted by Kassimito (1998) and Koda and Mukangara (1997). Approaching their studies, let alone their lives, with low self-esteem and negative self-image contributes to the poor academic performance of girls, (Malekela 1995) and their limited expectations of themselves. As Ruff (1973) points out, "Young women who

accept society's definition of them (as portrayed in the literature) have no self definition as individuals; they have nothing to withstand the strength of the stereotype's moulding."

"God's Bits of Wood", on the other hand, offers positive and affirming images of women. I suspect the students who responded to the questionnaire on this book had superior analytical skills to the original sample, however the majority of students recognised and identified the images of women as being positive as opposed to the negative or stereotypical images of women in other books studied. Asked what they felt about the differences, several female students noted feeling encouraged, as women, by the actions and participation of the women in this novel, e.g. "I can also do anything and men should stop oppressing us and making us stay five steps behind." And, "I can also involve myself in the struggle for rights, contributing my ideas and efforts." Exposing female students to these positive images of women has had a positive effect on the students themselves. There remained a group of students, male and female, who interpreted the women's efforts only in terms of the support they gave to the men and 6 female students failed to identify any difference between this novel and others they had studied.

The fifth question on which I was basing my research was:

- Do the female students studying A level English find the set texts relevant enjoyable and interesting?

My general questionnaire aimed to ascertain what kind of books the female and male students found interesting, enjoyable and relevant to them, and liked to read, and then whether the set texts fell into the same categories. I will deal with the differences I discovered between male and female students' preferences, briefly, then concentrate on the data relating to the female students. Clearly, students will gain much more from novels and plays which they enjoy and relate to than from those which they find dull, boring and irrelevant. (Klein 1968 in Taylor 1980: 8)

Before detailing and discussing the type of books students enjoy, I feel it is necessary to comment on the students' lack of 'experience' as readers; at least in English. Asked to name other (than the set texts) books they had read during the two years of their A level literature course, 23% of female students and 4.5% (1) of male students did not respond. 14% of female students identified books from the O level Literature syllabus and 12%

of female students responded in general terms, not actually identifying specific books. Almost half the female students, but only one male, had read no new books during the two years or were unable to remember and identify the books they had read. In relation to recreational reading, students are faced with a number of difficulties. Many of them have little or no access to libraries and the libraries to which some of them do have access, have very limited resources. Fiction sections have had few additions for the last 30 years. Books, relative to income, are expensive in Tanzania and the choice is limited. Many students, particularly the young women, have heavy demands on their time as they are required to contribute to the domestic duties of their households. Tanzania does not have a highly developed 'reading culture' and reading novels may well be seen by parents, other family members and even teachers, as a 'waste of time'.

This lack of a background and breadth in reading must make it difficult for students to define what kind of books they enjoy and gives them a limited foundation on which to base their study of English Literature. I feel that it lead, also, to somewhat 'conditioned' responses to the questionnaires.

Responses to my question asking what type of books students enjoy showed that books about love and romance are popular with male and female students (39.7% of females and 22.7% of males) who also identified books about 'life as a whole', religion and adventure almost equally. Books about politics and mystery / spy / detective stories are popular with the male students who also identify books on social and economic issues as being interesting to them. Many female students identified books which may have related to their studies such as plays and poetry and actual texts from the O level syllabus but they also mentioned sad books, non-fiction, and books with an educational message. One female student articulated the fact that she liked books "which talk of me". The reasons given for enjoying the books identified in question two bore out these preferences with; the book gave a true picture of life; it had characters I relate to; it dealt with emotions and feelings; it taught me how to live and, it was religious, featuring most frequently in their responses. By asking students to list a group of statements which could be used to describe books in their own order of preference, I hoped to add to the picture of female preferences. Both male and female students think it is important that a book has an interesting or educational message. The male students rated highly the fact that a book challenges them to some discussion, argument or action and that it makes them feel hopeful about their own future and the world. The setting was not

considered important by male students and nor was a happy ending. The female students' responses varied widely but they seemed to want to situate themselves within the book, wanting it to be believable and to have characters which they can understand and relate to and to deal with emotions and feelings that they can understand. They showed a preference for exciting books and, like the male students, for books which make them feel hopeful about their own future and the world.

Focusing on the texts studied, and attempting to ascertain their relevance, I asked the students if they had received positive or negative ideas about their own future life and career choices from the set texts. 19% of female students and 27% of male students failed to respond or responded inappropriately. 57% of female students and 64% of male students had received positive ideas while 40% of female students and 4.5% of male students recorded receiving negative ideas. Some students had received both. Only one male student noted a negative response and the figures indicate that the 'feel good' factor for female students is considerably less than for males. The positive reactions noted by the male students almost all concern what they can 'learn' about life, and apply to their own lives, from the book.

The female students, on the other hand, recorded many negative reactions to the content of the set texts, finding their portrayal of society depressing and the problems shown too difficult to overcome, particularly for women. They did record some positive reactions as well which focused on what they could learn from the texts and apply to their own lives in overcoming obstacles. Through exposure to these pictures of life they saw that they needed to be tough and self-reliant.

In comparing the eight texts covered in my literature review, but particularly the three studied by the sample students, it is evident that they bear little resemblance to the types of books identified by the students as being interesting, enjoyable and relevant, apart from their political content (important to the male students) and their capacity to impart an educational message. Many of the students' responses seem, to me, rather 'conditioned' and 'teacher-guided', however there is evidence that some students do relate the content of the books to themselves and recognise that the content may shape their thinking.

There is strong evidence that the study of the selected literature is a less positive experience for the female students than for the male students, which is not surprising

given the research findings of Ruff (1973) and Klein (1968), already referred to, and the results of my own research into the images of women in these texts and their effect on female students.

The answer to the third of my research questions;

- Do the students recognise and question negative images of women?

is implicit in the data already discussed. To a large extent both female and male students accept the negative images of women portrayed in the set texts. On the whole, they lack the sophistication, as readers, and the skills, to identify these images as such and they lack the confidence to question them. However, there was evidence that some students were aware of the negative nature of many of the images of women, were able to articulate that authors were portraying 'society's view' and questioned social norms which accepted such a negative status for women. As the students progressed through the questions, changes in the responses and thinking of many of them were evident which indicated to me that they would be very responsive to progressive ideas with regard to women's status and roles and willing to discuss these.

The final two research questions were based on the assumption that at least some of the books in the A level syllabus do create negative images of women and ask:

- Are there books which would, a) portray more positive images of women, e.g., show them in decision making positions having an influence on society in general, as well as domestically, and contributing to the development of their families and nations and, b) question the roles assigned to women in traditional African society?
- Would students relate to and enjoy such books?

In my review of literature, I read a wide range of novels, short stories, plays and poetry by both male and female African writers and conclude that there are books by African writers, particularly by women, which portray positive images of women, as described in a) above, and positive gender relations. I have identified and reviewed six of these books in chapter five and listed others in Appendix 2. I believe, given their identified preferences in books, that students would relate to these books and find them interesting and enjoyable and that they would, therefore, be excellent choices as set texts for literature study and as stimulation to discussion of such things as human rights, gender

equality and national development. They would help students and teachers to meet the goals of Tanzanian Education and the objectives of Secondary Education.

The two additional questions in the general questionnaire asked about students' future study and career plans. Although the responses to these questions are not directly related to my research questions, there is a link to question two and I was interested in whether there would be a difference in response between the male and female students and in what hopes and ambitions the young women expressed. Asked about their immediate future plans, 23% of female students and 4.5% of male students did not respond. 67.7% of female student and 91% of male students expressed the hope that they would go to University. 4.5% of male students hoped to continue with unspecified education. All the female students who responded planned on further education. Those not expecting to go to University identified Teachers' College, 2%, Wild Life and Tourism College, 2%, and Journalism and Broadcasting School, 5%.

Given the limitation of their A level subject choices, the range of proposed careers was wide, with Law, 42% of female students and 45.5% of male students, being the most popular choice. Journalism, Education, Broadcasting, The Diplomatic Corps and Linguistics were other popular choices by both male and female students. Many students articulated their desire to help other people and take part in the development of the nation. However, 15% of female students failed to respond to this question.

It is clear that once students have reached this level in their studies the majority of female students do have the desire to continue their education and to take up careers which will be fulfilling and will offer opportunities to help in the development of their nation. There must be sufficient affirming influences in their lives to counteract, to some extent, the negative influences of the school environment and society as a whole. The fact that less than 20% of the students at Dar es Salaam University are women implies that most of these young women will be disappointed however. For a variety of reasons, the main one possibly being that they do not reach the academic standard required, they will not achieve their hopes. It is, therefore, imperative that their education be designed to increase their self esteem, stimulate them and enable them to reach the necessary academic standard to have an equal opportunity with male students to fulfil their ambitions .

While many possibilities for improving the provision and quality of education for young women and girls in Tanzania have become evident during the course of my research and study, my recommendations will be confined to the specific focus of this research.

**My recommendations are:**

- That literature teachers be offered the opportunity to attend gender awareness training seminars to, a) increase their ability to identify gender issues in the set literature and to discuss such issues with their students in a constructive way and, b) assist them in planning courses which will enhance the self-esteem of all students and present female students with a wider range of possibilities for their lives.
- That curriculum designers make some changes to the present list of texts recommended for A level literature study, eliminating those which portray women in a degrading and negative way and introducing new texts such as those recommended in chapter five, which will contribute to changes in gender relations and the enhancement of self-esteem for female students.
- That schools be assisted to, a) purchase class sets of some of the new novels and, b) to improve the quality of the fiction section of their libraries (or to create one) to offer a wide and relevant range of books for senior students.
- That study guides be written, where necessary, for newly introduced texts to assist teachers and students.

This research and its conclusions, which focus on a specific curriculum area, English Literature, confirms the findings of other educational researchers that female students are disadvantaged by the curriculum and the school environment. The Literature teachers exhibit a strong will to do their best for the students, which is, however, undermined by the lack of on-going training and appropriate resources. This, together with the clearly expressed desire of the female students to continue their education beyond secondary level, indicates the appropriateness of putting in place measures which will facilitate change. These students are a valuable human resource and their contribution to national development should be fostered and encouraged.

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## 1. Intruction

English is one of the subjects offered to Form V and VI students in Tanzania Secondary Schools. This syllabus replaces the previous one which has been in use since 1982.

The old syllabus was descriptive in nature; the topics had no boundaries and there was a confusion between literature and communication skills. Moreover, the themes and the books had been overtaken by time and events. It was therefore considered imperative to review the syllabus so as to cater for these shortfalls.

## 2. Goals of Education in Tanzania

The general objectives of education in Tanzania are:

- a) to guide and promote the development and improvement of the personalities of the citizens of Tanzania, their human resources and effective utilization of those resources in bringing about individual and national development;
- b) to promote the acquisition and appreciation of the the culture, customs and traditions of the people of Tanzania;
- c) to promote the acquisition and appropriate use of literacy, social, scientific, vocational, technological, professional and other forms of knowledge, skills and understanding for the development and improvement of the condition of man and society;
- d) to promote and develop self-confidence and an inquiring mind, understanding and respect for dignity and human rights and readiness to work hard for personal, self-advancement and national improvement;
- e) to enable and expand the scope of acquisition, improvement and upgrading of mental, practical, productive and other life skills needed to meet the changing needs of industry and the economy;
- f) to enable every citizen to understand the fundamentals of the national constitution as well as the enshrined human and civic rights, obligations and responsibilities;

- g) to promote the love and respect for work, self and wage employment and improved performance in the production and service sectors;
- h) to inculcate principles of the national ethic and integrity, peace and justice through the study, understanding and adherence to the provisions of the national constitution and international charters;
- i) to enable national use, management and conservation of the environment.

## 3. Objectives of Secondary Education

- a) to consolidate and broaden the scope of baseline ideas, knowledge, skills and principles aquired and developed at primary education level;
- b) to enhance further development and appreciation of national unity, identity and ethics, personal integrity, respect for and readiness to work, huma rights, cultural and moral values, customs, traditions and civic responsibilities and obligations;
- c) to promote the development of competency in linguistic ability and effective use of communication skills in Kiswahili and at least one foreign language;
- d) to promote opportunities for the acquisition of knowledge, skills, attitueds and understanding in prescribed or selected fields of study;
- e) to prepare stududents for tertiary and higher education, vocational, technical and professional training,
- f) To inculcate a sense and ability for self-study, self-confidence and self-advancement in new frontiers of science and technology as well as academic and occupational knowledge and skills;
- g) to prepare the students to join the world of work.

## 4. Objectives of Teaching English in Form V and VI.

The objectives of teaching English in Form V and VI are:

- a) to provide with the students skills that will enable them to communicate accurately and proficiently in English;
- b) to provide the students with some basic knowledge about language in general and English language in particular;
- c) to raise the students' awareness on the organisation and use of English language;

- d) to give the students some basic knowledge on the English language sound system;
- e) to inculcate in the students the habit of reading, appreciating and creating literary works;

#### **5. Selection and Organisation**

This syllabus is divided into 5 main topics named Communication in English, Introduction to Language, Grammar (which includes Semantics in Form VI.) Introduction to Phonology and Literature. Topic 2, Introduction to Language ends in Form V while the rest continue up to Form VI.

#### **6. Choice and use of Instructional Materials**

In the event of the book liberalization policy, it is the duty of the English language teacher to ensure that only those books which have met the requirements given to the publishers will be procured for use by the students;

Periodic issuance of lists of approved and recommended books will also be of great help to teacher's choice of books. Nevertheless the learners, teachers and parents may be free to choose other books and textual materials for reference at home or in school and public libraries. Teachers will also be expected to advise learners on how best to use books and other textual materials provided by the school or available in the market, class, school or community libraries.

#### **7. Methods of Teaching and Learning English**

The English teacher will be free to apply and use teaching methods considered relevant and effective in promoting English learning. Amongst these are discussion, debates, study visits, inviting guest speakers and projects. The teacher is strongly advised to use them.

#### **8. Assessment of Students Performance**

It is expected that every teacher of English will assess their students periodically in order to identify their weaknesses and strength so as to help them or encourage them as appropriate. The continuous assessment should as far as possible concentrate on testing the theoretical and practical aspects of the language.

Through these assessments, the teacher will also evaluate the effectiveness of this methods and teaching style.

At the end of Form VI the students are expected to sit for an overall achievement examination in English. This examination is intended to measure the extent to which the objectives of the course have been attained in the two-year period. It is also the basis for selection to higher education.

#### **9. Instruction Time**

In order to teach this course effectively, a total of 10 periods of 40 minutes each are required per week. The teacher is advised to make use of the allocated time. Lost instructional time should be compensated through the teachers' own arrangement with the school administration.

Commissioner of Education  
Ministry of Education and Culture

## APPENDIX 2

### BOOKS BY FEMALE AFRICAN WRITERS RECOMMENDED FOR USE WITH A LEVEL STUDENTS OR AS LIBRARY RESOURCES

Ata Aidoo Ama	Someone Talking to Sometime Our Sister Killjoy ( and others)	The College Press, Zimbabwe
Ba Mariama	Scarlet Song	East African Ed. Publishers
Beyala Calixthe	Your Name Shall Be Tanga	Heinemann African Writers Series
El Sadaawi Nawal	Woman at Point Zero (and others)	Zed Books, London
Emecheta Buchi	Kehinde Gwendolen The Joys of Motherhood (and others)	Heinemann AWS
Fall, Aminata Sow	The Beggar's Strike	Longman African Classics
Gordimer Nadine	July's People Burger's Daughter A Guest of Honour (and others)	Penguin Books
Gordon Ian Ed.	Looking For A Rain God And other short stories from Africa	Macmillan, Kenya
Head Bessie	Tales of Tenderness and Power Maru The Collector of Treasures (and others)	Heinemann AWS
Makhalisa Barbara	Eva's Song	Harper Collins, Zimbabwe
Masitera Lilian	Militant Shadow (poetry) Now I Can Play (short stories)	Minerva Press, London
Njau Rebeka	Ripples in the Pool	Transafrica Publishers
Ogola Margaret	The River and the Source	Focus Books, Nairobi
Ogot Grace	The Promised Land The Strange Bride	East African Ed. Publishers
Sobott-Mogwe Gaelle	Colour Me Blue (short stories)	Heinemann AWS
Vera Yvonne	Butterfly Burning Why Don't you Carve Other Animals? (short stories) Under the Tongue (and others)	Baobab Books

APPENDIX 3

GENERAL QUESTIONNAIRE

School: .....Age:.....Female/Male

1. What kind of books do you enjoy?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. Outside of your literature course, have you read other books in English during the past two years which you have found interesting, and enjoyable.  
If so, name them and describe briefly what you enjoyed about them.

3. Re list the following statements in your order of importance –Just use the letters.

- The book:-
- A is believable
  - B is exiting
  - C has a happy ending
  - D has an interesting/educational message
  - E has characters which I can understand and relate to
  - F challenges me to some discussion, argument or action
  - G has a familiar setting
  - H deals with emotions and feelings which I understand
  - I has political themes which I understand and feel strongly about
  - J makes me hopeful about the world and my own future
  - K is set in recent times or the present

4. Have any of the characters situations or actions in the books you have studied given you positive or negative ideas about your own future life, career choices etc?

- 5 Which of the books you have studied on the English literature course did you enjoy most or find most interesting? Give your reasons.

## LITERATURE QUESTIONNAIRE

School:.....Age:.....Female/Male

### A GRAIN OF WHEAT

1. What do you see as being the main issue in this novel?
2. Choose two characters from the novel and say how you think they are effected by this issue.
3. Mumbi has been taught to write by her brothers. Why is this? What is your reaction to this?
4. Briefly describe two important relationships in the novel explaining why you consider them to be important.
5. What is your opinion of Gikonyo's treatment of Mumbi?
6. What were your feelings about Mumbi's own mother's reaction when Mumbi took her child and returned to her parents?
7. Did you have any sense of hope for Kenyan society after reading this novel? Explain your answer.

Thank you for your cooperation

## LITERATURE QUESTIONNAIRE

School:..... Age:..... Female/Male

### THE TRIAL OF DEDAN KIMATHI

Of over 40 characters in this play only three are women.

- 1 Suggest why this might be?
- 2 Does it seem a realistic representation of society to you?
- 3 What qualities of character are shown by 'the girl' and 'the woman'?

Most of the other characters have names.

- 4 On reading the play did you question the use of 'the girl' and 'the woman' instead of real names?
- 5 What is the effect of this lack of names?
- 6 Do you think you and other young women would have shown similar qualities to 'the woman' in the same circumstances?

Thank you for your cooperation

## LITERATURE QUESTIONNAIRE

School:..... Age:

Female/Male

### THE BEAUTYFUL ONES ARE NOT YET BORN

This novel is centred on the difficulties experienced by 'the man' in trying to relate to and be fulfilled as a person within his society. It does not deal with his wife Oyo's thoughts and difficulties. This gives the novel a rather one sided effect.

1. Why do you think that is?
2. What do you imagine her difficulties and troubles were?
3. Do you consider them to be important? Why or why not?

Re read this section from the novel—"What will man.....left anywhere" ( pg. 64 East African Publishers Ltd. Kenya 1996 )

4. What is your reaction to this passage?
5. Is it an acceptable description of women when their husbands go off to war?
6. Do you think it likely that you would behave like this if you were in that position?
7. Are there any other descriptions of women or women's behavior that you noted particularly or questioned when you read this book? If so, please note them down.
8. Which character, if any, do you relate to or admire in this novel?

Thank you for your cooperation

## LITERATURE QUESTIONNAIRE

School:..... Age:..... Female/Male

### GOD'S BITS OF WOOD

1. Although this novel is about the strike of the railway workers, who are men, the strike involves women too. Explain how three different women or groups of women are involved.
2. Why was the involvement of the women essential for the success of the strike?
3. Which character did you admire most in the novel? Explain why.
4. Did you identify with this or any other character in the novel? In what ways?
5. On pg.33 ( Zimbabwe Pub. House 1984 edition ) it says "The days passed..... And seeing the burdened shoulders, the listless walk, the women became conscious that a change was coming for them as well."  
The strike took place in 1947/8. Do you feel that the changes predicted for women have taken place in Africa in the last 50 years?
6. In what ways is N'Deye Touti's education failing her?  
  
Does your education fail to meet your specific needs in any way?
7. What difference, if any, did you find between this and other novels on the course?

How did you respond to these differences?

Thank you for your cooperation