

CEDAW in ELT

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What is CEDAW?

- The Committee/Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women.
- 30-article document.
- Adopted by the UN in 1979, enacted in 1981.

Aims:

“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.”

The convention defines discrimination against women as "any distinction, exclusion or restriction made on the basis of sex...in the political, economic, social, cultural, civil or any other field".

Full text available here: <https://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/cedaw.htm>

Sustainable development goals (SDGs)

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are a continuation of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

- 2000-2015: 8 Millennium Development Goals
- 2015-2030: 17 Sustainable Development Goals

The aim of the Sustainable Development Goals is to develop peace & prosperity for people and the planet. A full list of the Sustainable Development Goals is available here:

<https://sdgs.un.org/goals>

As educators two goals are especially important - Goal 4: Quality Education and Goal 5: Gender Equality.

Goal 4: Quality Education

Some sub sections:

4.3 By 2030, ensure equal access for all women and men to affordable and quality technical, vocational and tertiary education, including university.

4.4 By 2030, substantially increase the number of youth and adults who have relevant skills, including technical and vocational skills, for employment, decent jobs and entrepreneurship.

4.A Build and upgrade education facilities that are child, disability and gender sensitive and provide safe, nonviolent, inclusive and effective learning environments for all.

4.C By 2030, substantially increase the supply of qualified teachers, including through international cooperation for teacher training in developing countries, especially least developed countries and small island developing states.

Goal 5: Gender Equality

Some subsections:

5.1 End all forms of discrimination against all women and girls everywhere.

5.5 Ensure women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic and public life.

A quick look at the status of women

2016: 61 million girls of primary & secondary school age not in education

2021: approx. 20% of women under 18 years old were married

In 18 /20 countries with the highest rates of child marriage, girls with no education are up to six times more likely to marry as children than girls with a secondary education.

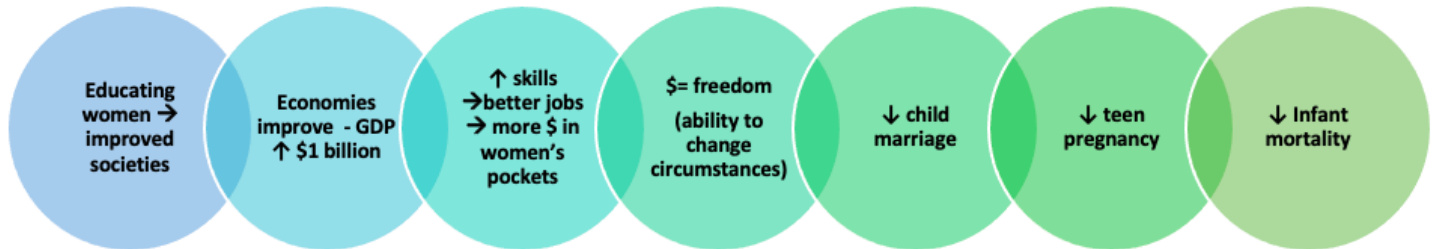
26% of women (age 15+) ever in a relationship experience intimate partner violence

2022: women only 26.2% of politicians in single and lower houses of government

43% of women (ages 15-49) have no say in their reproductive healthcare

The importance of educating women & girls

Educating women transforms the world:



Women in textbooks

According to textbooks (local & international):

- Women are traditionally shown as: domestic, emotional, unsuited to positions of power.
- Men are traditionally shown as: strong, self-controlled, employed only outside the home.

See [Tajeddin & Janebi Enayat \(2010\)](#) for a summary of early 2000s findings.

What's this got to do with ELT?

We need to consider the impact on Second Language Acquisition (SLA) of seeing oneself represented or not, and the way in which social power structures impact learners. To have success in learning, learners need to be invested rather than just motivated. To quote Bonnie Norton (Norton Pierce 1994):

“Investment in the target language is an investment in a learner's social identity”.

Such social identities may change over time and the attainment of a particular identity/goal may be a reason a woman is taking EFL classes:

- Women learn for growth.
- Women learn for safety.
- Migrant & refugee women:
 - learn to survive in adoptive countries.
 - learn to support their children.

Implications for ELT

We can:

- Diversify materials – find alternatives to poor images and texts.
- Encourage critical thinking – especially good if you can't deviate from materials.
- Discuss issues around women's wants and needs.
- Give women the floor.
- Encourage women into positions of power – in class and in our institutions.
- Look for **equity** over **equality**.
- Leach life skills with language skills – teach assertiveness along with language chunks.
- Recognise signs of abuse.

Equity vs Equality:

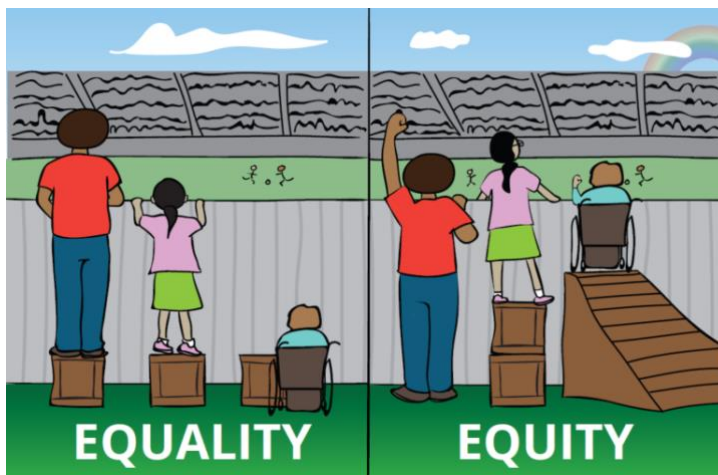


Image credit to Equity Tool with thanks: <https://www.equitytool.org/>

In the left image, everybody is given the same resource, but they do not all benefit. In the right image, everyone is given different assistance and therefore they can all achieve their goal.

In terms of women's equality, applying the idea of equity to give different women the tools they need to meet their goals eventually leads to an equal society.

Treating everyone equally does not actually create an equal society as it fails to acknowledge the disadvantages some people begin with (sexism, domestic duties, lack of resources etc.).

Reading suggestions

Books

1. *Diverse Educators: A Manifesto*, edited by Hannah Wilson & Bennie Kara. Available in paperback, e-pub and kindle formats. See also the Diverse Educators website: <https://www.diverseeducators.co.uk/>
2. *A Little Guide for Teachers: Diversity in Schools*, by Bennie Kara (Sage Publishing). Available in paperback and kindle formats.
3. *Teaching Human Rights: Practical activities for primary and secondary school* from the OHCHR/UN. Available in paperback and here in pdf from the Inter-agency Network for Education in Emergencies (INEE). <https://tinyurl.com/teachinghumanrights>
4. *How To Write Inclusive Materials*, by Tyson Seburn (ELT Teacher 2 Writer). Available in paperback and kindle formats. <https://eltteacher2writer.co.uk/our-books/how-to-write-inclusive-materials/>

Articles

1. Peirce, B. N. (1994). Language learning, social identity, and immigrant women.
2. Tajeddin, Z., & Janebi Enayat, M. (2010). Gender representation and stereotyping in ELT textbooks: A critical image analysis. *Teaching English Language*, 4(2), 51-79.

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