

Equalising Education

Lesson Two: What strategies are there for improving female access to education?

Starter Activities:

Returning to the card sorting exercise (Handout: Educational Factors) from Lesson one, students can separate the cards again into those that are associated with low levels of female literacy and those associated with improved levels of female literacy. Taking the latter set, students should try to create a Spiral of Affluence on flipchart paper, showing how once education is in place for young women, many other positive processes are kick started, leading to further improvements in female education provision.

It is important at this stage to highlight to students the less talked about side of female education and the empowerment it can bring. Educated young women are more likely to be physically mobile and be able to migrate to other places, including overseas locations and as such a negative 'brain drain' effect can occur. With women less reliable on their husbands to financially provide for them, women may be bolder in making choices about their relationships and part of this has been noted to include higher divorce rates and women choosing openly to become single parents.

Main Teaching:

Students can be given a set of strategies on Handout: Strategies for Managing Female Illiteracy that could help to improve the rates of female literacy in developing countries. From these students should pick three strategies that they think are most important and write a brief explanation of why they have chosen those three.

Then teachers, using Presentation: Managing Female Illiteracy can suggest the questions as a way of redefining what we see as a good management strategy. Teachers can ask students to name countries where these particular scenarios might be valid considerations. Students should then try to match from their list of strategies (and stronger students may be able to come up with valid alternatives) a management option for each of the scenarios given.

From this students should realise that improving female educational provision is a lot more complicated than simply providing funds for infrastructural building works and more teachers. Through discussions students should be able to realise the complex nature of trying to achieve the education targets set by the Millennium Development Goals. As part of the discussions, the word 'holistic' should be explored. While some students may have come across this word in relation to medicine, they should be encouraged to think about this phrase in relation to wholesale and inclusive management strategies in geography – something of which organisations are becoming ever more conscious.

Plenary Activities:

Referring back to their spiral of affluence in relation to female education that was produced in the Starter Activity, students should in pairs try to draw up a list of all of the different players involved in providing a better provision of education for girls. This can be fed into the class and added to if necessary. Students can then choose six of the key players (in their opinion) and using Handout: Female Education Conflict Matrix fill in the conflict matrix showing the strength of the relationship and whether it is positive or negative between the different players.

This can create a further discussion that not only strengthens the idea of holistic thinking from the Main Teaching about the issues, but also about the approaches one can take to resolve barriers to more widespread access to education for female students. A key question is whether one should target the worst relationship between players (i.e. the biggest barriers) and try to improve them or harvest the positivity created by the relationships that work and use them to further the cause (in the hope of improving other relationships via osmosis).

Extension / Homework Activities:

Students can investigate the arguments surrounding the format of the 2014 thirty year anniversary of 'Band Aid' and the rhetoric implied by that form of project. A number of people have argued that it perpetuates a patronising view of Africa (see **Links**). Students can explore the idea of whether this form of top-down charitable aid is outdated or whether fund raising for those who are in poverty is as needed as ever.

Students might like to explore the work of a gap year company that sends students to a developing country. Many directly quote that they are helping to build girls' only secondary schools and targeting equality in education provision. Students can try to look beneath the surface of these companies and try to gauge whether what gap year students are doing on their projects is really making a difference.

Students can look at the 'Team' section of the Camfed website (see **Links**). Students can be encouraged to think about how the organisation structures itself and think about the advantages and disadvantages of employing people in country to carry out development work as part of an international non-government organisation.
