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## Feminist Pedagogy and the South African Curriculum: The case of Women and Food Security

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### Abstract

There is a food security crisis in South Africa and black working-class women are the shock absorbers of this crisis. It follows that where food studies are included in the South African curriculum, the relationship between women and food security should be understood and critiqued by learners. Improvements in gender equality have also been identified as one of the primary drivers of improvements in food security. In this paper, the South African curriculum is analysed in terms of food studies, gender studies and the promotion of gender equality. Using the lens of feminist pedagogy, a set of qualitative indicators were developed to assess the content and praxis of the curriculum. While there is content which deals with gender and with food, these are presented separately. In the Geography and Agriculture curricula, there is a marked lack of focus on gender concerns. This article concludes that the curriculum could be reoriented to include an awareness and critique of the nexus of women and food and that more positive representations of women as active and powerful agents are needed in the South African Curriculum Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS).

**Keywords:** curriculum approaches, curriculum review, gender, food security, feminist pedagogy.

### Introduction

There is a profound food security crisis in South Africa. In 2014, Stats SA (2017b) found that 53.8 per cent of households were food insecure and “women – especially black African working-class women – are the shock absorbers of this crisis” (Cock, 2016, p.122). There are several reasons for this. First, the gendered division of labour

in households means that women are “generally expected to fulfil the reproductive role of bearing and raising children, caring for other family members, and household management tasks, as well as home-based production” (Reeves & Baden, 2000, p.8). Second, there is an increasing feminisation of poverty. Women head just over 40 per cent (41.36 per cent)

of households in South Africa (Stats SA, 2017b). Only 33.9 per cent of these households earn income from formal employment (salaries, commission, wages or self-owned businesses) and over half (56.1 per cent) of female-headed households are dependent on grants and pensions (Stats SA, 2017a). Female-headed households are also less able to produce food due to limited access to land and resources; time scarcity and a lack of mobility. Third, there are gender gaps in food security at the household level. One of the results of gender inequality is that when there is less food, gendered intra-family dynamics may mean that women and girls receive less food than their male counterparts (Agarwal, 2018). There is also a complex relationship between food and gender-based violence. Food may be withheld as an act of violence or food preparation and portion allocation may be used as an excuse for violence (Lentz, 2018; Williams Forson & Counihan, 2012).

The Asian Development Bank (2013) has identified improvements in gender equality as one of the most important factors in improving household food security. This finding and the context of gender and food mean that this should be a core theme in the curriculum. Learners should understand and critique the relationship between women and food and the curriculum should enable women to become producers of food, rather than consumers. Moreover, if improvements in gender equality have such a significant effect on the improvement of food security, then education in South Africa should also include content that not only promotes gender equality but also concretises gender equality through pedagogic praxis. Food studies are well presented in the South African curriculum and this is unsurprising as food is a core issue of the lifeworlds of all children. There is also content in the South African curriculum that promotes gender equality. In this paper, this content will be analysed

and discussed and how the relationship between women and food is presented will be explored.

### **Feminist pedagogy**

Feminist pedagogy emerged in the early 1980s with a ground-breaking text called *Women's Ways of Knowing*. This foundational work draws attention to the "missing voices of women in our theories of how people know and learn" (N. R. Goldberger et al., 1996). The concept of "voice" is central to the question of how we improve the ways in which women and girls learn. It relates to how teachers and learners interact in the spaces of learning. Feminist scholars of pedagogy argue that the voice of women and girls is often denied in the context of *report* talking. This is where there is an "expert" in a dominant position and the voices of learners are secondary to this expert voice (E. R. Hayes, 2001). The gender of the "expert" is not limited to men, but report talk is often associated with norms of masculinity. By contrast, *rapport* talk emphasises the relationship between learners and educators (E. Hayes & Flannery, 2000) and positions learners as capable agents in their learning journeys.

As feminist pedagogic discourse has thickened, the concept of voice has become more complex. The concept that the silencing of the voices of girls and women is always oppressive is foundational, but the discourse has branched into considering the multiple ways in which voice can be expressed in learning contexts (Leona M. English & Irving, 2015; E. Hayes & Flannery, 2000). In acknowledging the multiplicity of learner identities, feminists in the field point out that there is no specific manner in which girls and women and boys and men learn (Leona M. English & Irving, 2015). The emphasis has shifted to thinking about the politics of listening in the learning situation (Butterwick, 2012). Listening is an act of moral humility laden

with radical openness, curiosity and sensitivity (ibid). Clinchy (1996) explicates the idea of the pedagogy of listening in her concepts of separate and connected knowing. Separate knowing is distanced and impartial, while connected knowing is empathetic and engaged (ibid).

Learning is traditionally regarded as an external process (Flannery, 2000). The learner listens to the authoritative “expert” voice. In feminist pedagogy, learning is an internal process where the self becomes the referent of knowledge (ibid) and this can only occur in a safe space of co-created learning. This co-created learning space is a dialogic mode where knowledge is viewed as a product of collaboration (Rule, 2015). This position has opened feminist pedagogy to a greater understanding of intersectionality in teaching praxis. Connell's (2007) work, for example, has been influential. She argues that knowledge (and learning) is centred on masculinist Western modalities. In a similar vein, Black feminist pedagogues have called for an analysis of privilege and the acknowledgement of differential access to education (D’Arcangelis & Huntley, 2012; Grande, 2003; Hooks, 1994). This call has extended the notions of co-creation and dialogue, to include solidarity as a central component of learning (Butterwick, 2012; Manicom & Walters, 2012). This requires an active and politically transformative pedagogy that promotes the core values of respect and inclusion (Manicom & Walters, 2012).

These concepts of voice, identities, connection, collaboration, solidarity and political transformation have solidified into the field of critical feminist pedagogy. The foundation of this philosophy is the fostering of social critique through open discussions about power, class and gender and the intersections between. It is also concerned with promoting an awareness of the power relations inherent to the classroom structure (Leona M. English &

Irving, 2015). Geographers have made a steady contribution to feminist pedagogy, holding that an analysis of the power relations associated with spatiality is relevant to feminist pedagogical practice (Browne, 2005; Dowler, 2002; McGuinness, 2009; Oberhauser, 2002, 2019; Simon, 2009).

### **Feminist pedagogy in the South African context**

One of the first post-apartheid priorities for the African National Congress was the transformation of the curriculum (Chisholm, 2003). The National Curriculum Statement emerged in 1997 (Department of Basic Education, 2011) as a means of promoting more democratic teaching with increased teacher participation in the curriculum (Chisholm, 2003). An important aspect of this transformation was the issue of gender and the Department of Basic Education (2002) integrated the issue of gender into its policy framework. The focuses of this policy framework are mainstreaming gender throughout the curriculum; building the capacity of stakeholders to effect gender-based policies and programmes and; the reduction of “sex-based and gender based violence and harassment in schools” (Department of Basic Education, 2002, n.p).

Unterhalter (Aikman & Unterhalter, 2006, 2007; Aikman, Unterhalter, & Challender, 2005; Unterhalter, 2007, 2008; Unterhalter & Carpentier, 2010) is a core theorist of gender and education in the South African context. She is careful to separate the issues of gender parity and equity. Parity relates to quantitative measurements such as the number of girls compared to boys in schools and the relative performance of girls. It also relates to the rolling out of infrastructure, facilities and resources (Aikman & Unterhalter, 2006). In terms of parity indicators, South Africa used the Annual National Assessments to

benchmark the performance of learners in literacy and numeracy. In 2014, the average for this test at the level of Grade 4 was 37 per cent with a mode of 20 per cent. At Grade 6, the average was 43 per cent with a mode of 41 per cent. At Grade 9, the average was 11 per cent with a mode of 4 per cent. The situation internationally was bleaker. The Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) was used as a benchmark for performance in Math and Science. In 2011, South Africa was the worst-performing country in relation to twenty-one middle income countries (McCarthy and Olifant 2013). South African Grade nine scholars were two years behind the average Grade eight scholar in mathematics and 2.8 years behind the average Grade eight scholars in science (ibid). While girls outperform boys in many subjects, the situation in terms of mathematics and physical science is more perturbing for girls:

...it is clear that male matriculants outperform their female counterparts in all mathematics-related subjects: in 2013, the male pass rate was higher than the female pass rate by 9.1 percentage points in mathematical literacy; 7.9 percentage points in mathematics; 7.4 percentage points in physical science; and 3.3 percentage points in accounting.

(Department of Women 2015)

Aikman and Unterhalter (2006, p.3), however, argue that parity is “a rather narrow aspiration”. Gender equality relates to equal rights and citizenship (Aikman et al., 2005). It is a far-reaching concept, “...gender equality in education as extensive and universal, entailing many actions including school provision, curriculum reform, teacher training, the management of sexual harassment, and

opposition to violence against women (Unterhalter, 2008, p.542). Aikman and Unterhalter (2006) critique the women in development and the gender and development approaches to their understanding of curriculum. Their message is that the gender and development framework has key implications for education which include thinking about the interplay of inequalities in the institutional constructs in schools and broader society.

In terms of some of the equity indicators, which take this interplay between the institutional constructs of schooling and broader society into account, between the ages of seven and fifteen, attendance rates for girls are higher compared to boys in South Africa. The Department of Women (2015) reports that there is a 99 per cent attendance rate at this level. Between the ages of sixteen and eighteen years, this rate drops significantly to 86.1 per cent (ibid). There were two dominant reasons stated for leaving school at the end of Grade Nine: childbearing and a lack of funding for education. It is interesting to note, that, unlike male school leavers, female school leavers did not report that they were leaving to take up employment. The Department of Women (2015) argues that this may suggest a labour market disadvantage for female early school leavers. This paints a bleak picture for girls leaving school because they are pregnant or their families cannot afford to send them to school. Many of them end up staying at home looking after infants and children, joining the increasingly feminised ranks of NEETS<sup>1</sup> or become domestic workers. Currently, women account for 54 per cent of NEETS (ibid).

While the state makes provision for girls to return to school after childbearing, Grant

<sup>1</sup> NEETS refers to youth between the ages of fifteen and thirty-four years who are not employed or enrolled in formal education or training.

and Hallman (2008) present a statistical analysis of the reasons why teenagers do not return to school. They argue that there are several incentives for poorer learners to return to school and, in many cases, they do. However, they also found that if teenagers were the primary caregivers of their child, they were far less likely to re-enter the schooling system. Their recommendations include access to pregnancy termination and far greater public support for day-care affiliated with schools. That girls are frequently the ones that drop out of school due to childbearing, means that the normative construction of girls as primary caregivers has not been sufficiently challenged.

Epstein and Morrell (2012) extend Unterhalter's notion of gender equity. Drawing on the seminal work of Mohanty (1988) and Connell (2007), they argue that we need to be careful not to impose theories of gender equity and economic development from Northern perspectives, but rather generate and advocate for knowledge generated from the South. Simmonds (2014) further extends the oeuvre of feminist pedagogy in South Africa. She focuses on the curriculum, emphasising that curriculum is a social product and infuses her analysis with ideas of intersectionality and empowerment. She argues that the curriculum needs to find ways to "disrupt traditional gender discourses so the multiple layers of gender diversity can be embraced" (Simmonds, 2014, p. 648). In a careful review of the current (CAPS) curriculum, she points out that there is a "narrow view" of gender equality and women and girls are cast as victims thus discrimination against, rather than the empowerment of, women is emphasised.

### **Developing an assessment framework for the pedagogy of women and food**

The review of feminist pedagogy offers a range of principles from which qualitative

assessment criteria of the curriculum can be developed. The object of this set of criteria is not to construct a(nother) set of judgements, but rather to foster a discussion of how feminist pedagogy can enrich the ongoing project of curriculum development and teaching practices in the South African context. There are two main themes in this framework. Feminist pedagogues draw our attention to how curriculum content is structured. They also provide insight into the gendered dynamics of the learning experience.

In curriculum design, critical feminist pedagogy informs a radical shift away from positivist philosophies. Positivism views knowledge as fixed and processual and the learning process is similar. Within post-positivist curriculum design, humanist approaches stress the affective components of learning. The objective of this style of curriculum development is authenticity and empathy (Alwis, 2012). There is also an emphasis on independence; implying that learners become increasingly self-directed. In post-structuralist curriculum design, the capacity to critically engage the narrative structures of knowledge is highlighted (Slattery, 2006). Poststructuralist curriculum developers promote content for ensuring that the learner can acquire the skill of viewing the concepts associated with a particular discipline as part of broader social constructions.

Similarly, in more radical approaches to learning, the learner is encouraged to become aware of how the concepts of a particular discipline and institutions of learning overall are implicated in the promotion of particular ideological positions (Cho, Crenshaw, & McCall, 2013). Feminist pedagogy embraces the social constructionism of poststructuralist approaches to curriculum development and the cornerstones of critical pedagogy. It emphasises challenges such as the choice of text, language and assumptions underlying curriculum content (L.M.

English & Irving, 2015). Do they, as Simmonds (2014) suggests, reinforce the status quo or do they question and challenge social norms around gender? Feminist approaches to curriculum development also connect learning with the everyday lifeworlds of learners (L.M. English & Irving, 2015). Furthermore, feminist pedagogues highlight the importance of avoiding mapping gender issues to girls and women, but to rather integrate discussions of the intersections of masculinity, sexuality, race and class into the curriculum (Chisholm, 2003; Epstein & Morrell, 2012; McGuinness, 2009; Simon, 2009).

These different approaches are learner-centred as they stress the importance of the growth and skills of the learner as opposed to their capacity to recall material. In terms of classroom praxis, feminist pedagogy entreats educators to weave different and often paradoxical factors into the learning experience. For example, feminist teaching practice requires a safe space where all learners feel comfortable expressing their voice. At the same time, later feminist pedagogues call for teaching practice which is also provocative and challenging (L.M. English & Irving, 2015). The role of the teacher shifts in the feminist classroom from one of an expert to one of a facilitator or a co-creator who acknowledges the everyday lifeworlds of learners and fosters a sense of respect and solidarity amongst students. Woman leadership also needs to be encouraged throughout. Finally, the act of facilitation should be connected through listening and it should be flexible, experimenting with multiple teaching modalities to find ones that are compatible with different learning styles.

### **Assessing Women and Food in the South African CAPS curriculum**

The first part of a feminist assessment of the theme of women and food relates to curriculum content. The premise of

Curriculum 2005 was outcomes-based education and matched many of the criteria entrenched in feminist pedagogy. It centred on experiential and cooperative learning and encouraged respect for diversity and critical problem solving (Cross, Mungadi, & Rouhani, 2002). This “post-apartheid ‘New Curriculum’ hinged on weak classification and framing (Bernstein 1996) in that curricula subjects were integrated to each other and to the everyday...” (Ramatlapana and Makonye 2012, S8). This was a progressive learner-centred curriculum, however, the rollout of the curriculum was met with a great deal of resistance and confusion. The overarching criticisms were: there was a lack of teacher training; the curriculum contained difficult jargon and; the curriculum was light on content (Cross et al., 2002; Jansen, 1998). Other criticisms included a lack of resources to implement the curriculum and while the objective of the curriculum was to promote critical thinking, it ultimately reinforced privilege as well-resourced schools were able to implement it with far greater success (Cross et al., 2002).

In response to these concerns, the National Curriculum Statement was reviewed in 2000 and the Revised National Curriculum Statement was issued (Department of Basic Education, 2011). Again, this revised statement was subjected to several criticisms, so in response to these criticisms, the revised curriculum statement was reviewed again in 2009 (ibid). In 2012, the resultant National

Curriculum Statement (NCS) included three elements: The Curriculum Assessment Policy Statements (CAPS); the policy pertaining to the programme and promotion requirements of the NCS; and the protocol for assessment (Department of Basic Education, n.d.-b). Still within the outcome-based philosophical framework, CAPS was implemented as a way of addressing ongoing issues in South African

education. The CAPS curriculum provides educators with clear statements and time frames to deliver this content (Ramatlapanana and Makonye 2012).

It is important to understand a curriculum as a whole before critiquing particular areas of it. There should be a vertical relationship between different parts of the curriculum from primary through to tertiary level. All levels of education should be coherent with and support broader national policies and procedures. Each level should also teach critical thinking skills and it should speak to the current lifeworld experiences of learners. As the food crisis deepens in South Africa (Anyadike, 2016), the schooling system should also support broader mitigation policies and practices. Since women are the shock absorbers of the food crisis, it makes further sense that the curriculum should be orientated to understanding the relationship between women and food or at least dealing with gender and women's empowerment as core issues.

While the issue of food and women is absent from the CAPS curriculum at primary and secondary levels, food studies are present throughout the curriculum with a specific focus in some sections of the curriculum. At the foundation phase (from Grade 0 or R to Grade 3), the focus is on healthy habits in food and nutrition. Sources of food and the protection and storage of foodstuffs are looked at. The influence of weather and climate on food production is explored. Finally, learners are tasked to consider generational differences in food choices. It is a fairly balanced curriculum in terms of food studies. Six hours of contact time are dedicated solely to food and food features as a subtheme in other smaller parts of the curriculum. It is startling, however, that children are not introduced to the idea of growing food substantively. Several schools have community gardens on their grounds, and this provides a good opportunity for

experiential learning and engagement with the community. There is, however, no mention of using school resources to grow food, nor is there any mention of using food gardens at schools as a teaching resource.

At the intermediate schooling phase (Grades 4 to 6), sustainable food production (i.e., growing food without damaging natural resources) is the third aim of the Science, Technology and Society Section of the CAPS curriculum. Learners are taught about food chains and ecosystems and the importance of food for energy. They learn about food groups, food processing and how to read labels. They also continue to learn about diet and nutrition. In Grade 4, there is a substantive section on food and farming which covers how people get food, commercial and subsistence farming as well as a section on growing food in towns and cities. There are sections on crop and stock farming as well as food value chains. The impact of weather and climate on food supplies are dealt with here and in other areas of the curriculum. There is thus evidence of horizontal coherency through the curriculum, however, there appears to be little practical application or field research associated with this part of the curriculum.

Food reappears as a theme in Grade 5 in the Social Sciences curriculum in a section on the first African farmers and the division of labour associated with this period. In Grade 6, food appears in sections on Trade, where fair trade is discussed. There is also some discussion of food in sections on Climate Studies. The themes relating to food studies in the intermediate phase are expanded vertically in the senior phase (Grades 7 to 9). The nutritional value of foods is studied in Life Skills and indigenous knowledge relating to agriculture and food production is emphasised in the Natural Sciences. The Natural Science curriculum for this phase also contains the concepts of food webs and ecosystems. Food emerges in Physics-related energy studies, introducing the

importance of the joule as a unit of measurement. In Chemistry, as part of the Natural Science curriculum, food is explored as acids, bases and neutrals. The curriculum also deals with the digestive system and mitochondria and then links this to the effects of fast food and the diets of different cultures. Finally, the link between the greenhouse effect and food shortages is explored in the Natural Sciences.

The Social Sciences curriculum is a combination of Geography and History and while these subjects no longer exist in the CAPS curriculum, they are referred to as separate areas of the Social Sciences CAPS. Thus, there are History CAPS and Geography CAPS at the intermediate and senior phases. In the Social Sciences curriculum, food is explored in population growth and change in Grade 7. In Grade 9, food is explored as part of resource use and sustainability. The term “food security” is examined at local, regional and national levels. Factory farming and sustainable farming practices are taught as well as genetic modification. This constitutes four hours of the curriculum. There appears to be little overt engagement with gender in the curriculum and the question of food and women or even food and development, is absent. In the History CAPS of the Social Sciences curriculum, learners are taught about the changing role of women in the workplaces of the First World War. They also learn about the suffragette movement and the Women’s March to the Union Buildings in the 1950s. There is a section on the experiences of women and children left behind in rural areas when men migrated to cities and towns to work in mines.

There is a silence in the senior phase of the South African Social Sciences curriculum regarding food security as a gendered phenomenon. The Geography CAPS for Grade 9, for example, do not engage overtly with the issue of gender and,

despite including a section on development issues, there is no mention of women in development. Neither is there any mention of women as the shock absorbers of food insecurity. Indeed, where women are studied, they appear in a historical context as people whose roles were constrained in precolonial society or as activists in history. There is little about the contemporary challenges of womanhood and how this relates to food security and other issues of empowerment.

In the further education and training phase (Grades 10 to 12), there are three subjects associated with food production: Agricultural Management; Agricultural Science and Agricultural Technology. Agricultural Management handles content related to crop and animal food production; soil and water management; harvesting and; most importantly, farm management. Farm management includes economic and labour planning. Agricultural Sciences is a subject that covers a range of topics including soil science and climate change and agricultural economics. Agricultural economics includes a section on land ownership and redistribution. The importance of indigenous knowledge is also emphasized. Having said this, there is no mention of women or gender in the curriculum content. The subject of Agricultural Technology covers a broad range of topics including safety in the use of farming machinery, however, there is no information on how machinery may affect different genders. Neither is there information on gender-appropriate agricultural innovation. These subjects offer an opportunity to engage with and change perceptions regarding women and the productive labour that they offer in food production. It is an opportunity to reimagine the role of women as food producers rather than food consumers. Currently, this is an opportunity that has not been taken up.



Life Orientation is the study of the self in relation to others and society,

...[It] emphasises the importance of the application of skills and values in real-life situations, participation in physical activity, community organisations and initiatives (Department of Basic Education, 2011, p.8).

Gender is addressed in this subject, particularly in Grade 10 and 11. Gender is part of a section on democracy and human rights which deals with bias, discrimination and prejudice. The curriculum deals with legal and other rights-based mechanisms to address these issues. In Grade 10, learners are taught about gender inequality and its effects on health. There are sections on motherhood and fatherhood. Gender, race and stereotyping are core issues in the section of the curriculum on sports. In Grade 11, learners are tasked with examining the power relations associated with gender and work, gender-based violence and discrimination. Food production and food security are also studied in Grade 11, but no overt connection is made between these two sections of the curriculum. These sections of the curriculum are intended to promote gender equality and are crucial to improved food security. A study completed by the FAO and Asian Development Bank (2013) states that measures taken to improve gender equality were the single most important factor in improving food security. This study quotes a result of 55 per cent in gains against hunger due to the improvement of the status of women in society. Furthermore, the Deputy Director-General of the FAO identified gender-based violence as “having a devastating impact on the agriculture sector and food security by reducing the capacity and productivity of survivors as a result of illness, injury, stigma and discrimination” (FAO, 2017).

Food emerges as a central organizing theme in Life Sciences. Food chemistry forms an important part of the curriculum as do food chains and energy studies. Environmental interactions also feature in the curriculum. Food security is central to the Grade 11 curriculum and is connected to population growth, climate change, farming practices, alien plants and genetically modified foods and wastage. There is no engagement with issues of gender in this section. The Geography curriculum deals overtly with women and development at this level. Development Geography takes up 36 hours of the curriculum and the challenges to development, which includes learning about power, access and attitudes about women, takes up four hours (11 per cent) of this apportionment. The History curriculum has many references to women including their role in society in the 1600s; women in the Russian Revolution and the Soviet Union under Stalin; and their role in civil society protests. Food is not mentioned in the History curriculum.

Issues of gendered power relations are firmly embedded in the curriculum, especially in History. Geography and Life Sciences cover food security at various levels and at the higher levels, there is some engagement with women and development. Life Orientation focuses on women in terms of power differentials and gender-based violence. There is a sustained effort to engage with the issue of gender and the problems which women encounter in everyday life. Underpinning this engagement with gender is a progressive agenda seeking to empower girls at school and to work towards less toxic modes of masculinity, however, Simmonds (2014) argues that discrimination against, rather than the empowerment of, women is overemphasised. There is a “narrow view” of gender equality and women and girls are cast as victims (Simmonds 2014, 645). This is true of much of the curriculum

especially Life Orientation, however, the History CAPS curriculum is replete with images of strong women across race and class in leadership positions: the suffragette movement; the Women's March to the Union Buildings; women in the Russian revolution and civil society protests and the changing role of women in the workplace. Similarly, it is important to present a positive story of women and food, "working-class African and rural women are not passive victims. Many are playing a critical role in addressing hunger, sometimes in survivalist, defensive and ameliorative ways" (Cock, 2016, p. 123). The way in which the History CAPS have weaved a story of powerful women is an exemplar for other areas of the curriculum especially the CAPS relating to Geographical and Agricultural studies content.

The second part of this feminist assessment of the theme of women and food in the curriculum refers to pedagogical praxis. There are no clear guidelines in the National Curriculum Statement informing the learning situation, however, it promotes "active and critical learning: encouraging an active and critical approach to learning, rather than rote and uncritical learning of given truths" (Department of Basic Education, n.d.). There is also an emphasis on human rights, inclusivity and environmental and social justice. Related to this emphasis are "the principles and practices of social and environmental justice" (ibid). The NCS speaks specifically about issues of gender, race, poverty and language (as well as age and disability). Furthermore, it encourages the promotion of indigenous knowledge systems. With these principles in place, it is a progressive curriculum that embraces many of the tenets of feminist pedagogy.

While many have applauded the CAPS curriculum, concerns have emerged. In ensuring that the curriculum is standardised in terms of content, quality and timing,

participation in the curriculum has suffered. This curriculum represents a strong form of Bernstein's categories and framing (Ramatlapanana & Makonye, 2012). Thus, while teachers feel that learners have benefitted from the CAPS curriculum, they also feel that they have limited agency in the delivery of the curriculum (ibid). Furthermore, several educators have raised concerns that opportunities for situated and experiential learning, principles core to feminist pedagogy, have been minimised (ibid). With issues like high learner numbers in classrooms, pressurised resources and limited teacher training, there is reduced potential for the implementation of the flexible, connected and multi-modal approach of feminist teaching praxis.

### **Discussion and conclusion**

Food is a major organizing principle of the curriculum. Food security is well represented in the curriculum in both the Natural Sciences and Social Sciences. The curriculum cannot answer every social need or be everything to every person, however, where the curriculum answers the need for engaging with the issue of gender and the issue of food security it does so in a piecemeal manner. The issues of food security and gender are dealt with separately. In Life Sciences, in the earlier phases, there is a reflection on the cultural significance of food, but there is no reflection on women and food security. In the later phases of Life Sciences, food security is related to issues of population, climate change and farming practices, but there is little attention paid to the gendered social conditions underpinning these dynamics. The concept of women as the shock absorbers of food crises is not mentioned. Considering that learners are required to complete seven subjects, those not selecting a subject in the Social Sciences would have gaps in their knowledge of the social issues associated with food insecurity.

In the Social Sciences, the study of gender is well developed both vertically and horizontally in History. Geography has far less engagement with the issue of gender. It only really appears in the last phase of the curriculum when Development Geography is taught. This again promotes the narrow view of gender that Simmonds (2014) identifies in the context of Life Orientation. Furthermore, like Life Sciences, the relationship between food security and women or other issues of social injustice is not well developed. There is no moment in the curriculum where the concept of women as providers of food is engaged with critically and debated. Furthermore, when gender issues are raised in the curriculum, they are raised in relation to oppression and injustice. Gender is often raised in a piecemeal way through the curriculum. This is most apparent in the subjects associated with Agriculture. While it is an academically sound curriculum in terms of content, it could be improved by presenting the issue of gender and food far earlier. Moreover, gender should be consistently mainstreamed throughout the curriculum including subjects within the Natural Sciences and Agriculture.

There are several opportunities which the theme of women and food presents for the curriculum. The issue of women and food is profoundly part of the everyday lifeworlds of children and young adults. Even at an early phase of the curriculum, the gendered division of labour which puts women in the position of being shock absorbers of food insecurity can be put into question in the content and language of educational texts, topics and discussions. In the Geography CAPS, a lot more could be done to present women as powerful agents in development, and this should include discussions of the role of women in ensuring food security. In Life Orientation, a social critique of the construction of masculinity and gendered power relations could be highlighted over the presentation

of girls and women as victims. Finally, the capacity to produce food promotes food sovereignty and there are opportunities for experiential learning in the form of community gardens at schools. These could be used to teach children about indigenous food production practices and promote home food gardening. Food gardens can be used to teach mathematical concepts, entrepreneurship and biology. They could also be used to encourage a sense of solidarity with the community. In the long term, this could become part of a more connected curriculum that emphasises problem-solving, but in the short term, community gardens at schools could be used as part of extra-curricular activities.

Taking into account the confinements of the realities of the South African education system in South Africa, there is still much that can be done to co-create space for a more sustained engagement with the issue of women and food. There are opportunities to develop gender studies throughout the Geography CAPS. There is also a longer-term process where more of the principles of feminist classroom praxis could be rolled out in schools through training, advocacy and critique. While the pedagogical principles and philosophy underpinning the NCS CAPS curriculum are aligned with the tenets of feminist pedagogy, much could be done to consolidate and mainstream gender throughout and present women as powerful protagonists in food systems.

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