

The copyright of the above-mentioned described thesis rests with the author or the University to which it was submitted. No portion of the text derived from it may be published without the prior written consent of the author or University (as may be appropriate). *Short quotations may be included in the text of a thesis or dissertation for purposes of illustration, comment or criticism, provided full acknowledgement is made of the source, author and University.*

Gender and Access of Girls to Primary Education: A Comparative Study of Three Schools in Luanda

By: MADALENA ADRIANO FERNANDO

Supervised by: Professor Michael Cross.

Abstract

This research investigates the gender gap existing in primary schools in Luanda. Since there is a high level of illiteracy amongst girls in Luanda, this study explores how gender relations within families, communities and schools play a role in permitting or denying girls' access to primary education. To analyse the community and family perception towards education for girls, interviews were conducted with school authorities and households from the lower-class, middle-class and upper-class strata in the province of Luanda. Participatory observations were also carried out in different schools from different social strata. What was found was that gender relations within community and family play an important role on shaping parents' attitude towards education for girls. On the other hand it was found that within family and community, the transfer of social, human and cultural resources between boys and girls shapes girls' expectations and thus, affect girls' access and success in primary schools

Declaration

I declare that this research report is my own unaided work. It is submitted for the degree of Masters in Development Studies in the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. It has not been submitted before for any other degree or examination in any other university.

Madalene Adriano Fernando

03 day of January, 2005

DEDICATION

In memory of my father

The man who showed me the way for life
A man with principles,
A man who lives in my heart and soul.

Luyeye Fernando

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my gratitude to our Heavenly Father, God our Lord for His guidance as well as for giving me health and encouragement to try and fight to achieve this goal.

I would like also to express my gratitude to the following people who direct or indirectly contributed to this peace of work.

To my supervisor, Professor Michael Cross, for his help, time and dedication to this work. Thanks for being there all the time, giving me your support, knowledge, ideas and experience guiding me towards this achievement. THANKS!

To my dear mother Domingas Fernando.

To my husband Rui Santana

To my beloved and dearest daughter Jael and

To my all brothers and sisters

To the Development Studies Department and School of Humanities and Social Sciences of The University of Witwatersrand who gave me the chance to accomplish this work.

CONTENTS	page
Abstracts	i
Declaration	ii
Dedication	iii
Acknowledgements	iv
Contents	v
Chapter one: Introduction	
1.1 Background	1
1.2 Defining the Problem	5
1.3 Rationale	6
1.4 Outline of Chapters	7
Chapter Two: Gender Theories and Schooling for Girls	
2.1 Introduction	12
2.2 Gender Approaches in Education	13
2.3 Schooling for Girls: General Trends	15
2.4 Formal and Epistemic Access	17
2.5 Barriers to Learning Affecting Girls	23
2.5.1 The Role of gender in School and Family	23
2.5.1.1 The Household and Influence on the Perception Of Education for Girls	23
2.5.2 The Socio-cultural Beliefs and Practices	24
2.5.3 School Constraints	27
2.6 Strategies to Improve <i>Primary Schooling for Girls</i>	27
2.7 Conceptual Framework	29
2.7.1 The Interplay of Structural Factors and Individual/Psychological Factors	31
2.7.2 The Diversity or Heterogeneity among Girls	31
2.7.3 Life History/bibliography	32
2.7.4 Formal vis-à-vis Epistemic Access	33

2.7.5	Demand and Supply of Education for Girls	33
-------	--	----

Chapter Three: Methodology

3.1	Introduction	34
3.2	Research Design	34
3.2.1	Literature Review	34
3.2.2	Documentary Analysis	35
3.2.3	Case Studies	35
3.2.3.1	Site Identification	36
3.2.3.2	Identification of Schools	37
3.3	Data Collection Strategies	39
3.3.1	Methods	39
3.3.1.1	Participatory Observation	39
3.3.1.1.1	Ethical Observation	41
3.3.1.2	Interviews	41
3.3.1.3	Life History	44
3.4	My Respondents	45
3.5	Gaining Access	46
3.6	Sources	47
3.7	Data Analysis	47

Chapter Four: Girls' Education in Angola: Contextual Issues

4.1	Introduction	50
4.2	Constraints on Girls' Access to Primary Education in Angola	51
4.2.1	Social, Economic and Cultural Background	51
4.2.2	In-School Barriers	55
4.2.3	School Distribution in Luanda	59

Chapter Five: Government Policies Towards Education for Girls

5.1	Introduction	61
-----	--------------	----

Chapter Six: Gender Relations: Barriers and Access of Girls to Primary Schools

6.1	Introduction	70
6.2	Gender and Culture in School Environment	72
6.2.1	Education Quality	75
6.2.2	Curriculum Content	79
6.2.3	School facilities and School Management	81
6.3	Insecurity and Poverty Related Factors	84
6.4	Family/Parental Background: Social, Cultural and Human Capital Affecting Girls' Access to Primary Education	87
6.41	Gender, Family and Community	93
6.5.1	Gender, Family, Community and the Transfer of Resources	93

Chapter Seven: Conclusion and Recommendation

7.1	Recommendations	103
7.1.1	Increasing Supply of Primary Education	103
7.1.2	Increasing Demand for Primary Education	104
7.1.3	Equalizing the Learning Process	105

Chapter One: Introduction

More than 120 million school-aged children worldwide are denied their right to go to school - and the majority of them are girls. Every girl left out of school suffers a lifetime of lost opportunity. She is less able to develop to her full potential and is more vulnerable to poverty, exploitation and HIV/AIDS. More importantly, she loses her impact upon her family, her society and future generations.

This gender gap in education not only affronts the dignity and human rights of girls, but also blocks national development. Investments in girls' education have proven returns: girls are enabled to fulfil their potential and their rights, both as children and later as women. Once they become mothers, they can better ensure their children's well being. Economic productivity increases, population growth slows and poverty decreases_ (The United Nations International Children's Fund Annual Report 2003).

1.1 Background

Education has long been viewed as an instrument of social change and sustainable development. However, it is impossible to achieve development if girls and women are excluded from the process. For that matter, girls and women have to receive the same education as boys and men in order to permit them to participate fully in the development of nations. More specifically, "education for females advances gender equality and empowerment" (Lockheed and Verspoor 1991:25). In postcolonial Africa, the education of girls is considered an effective tool in empowering female citizens

enhancing their capabilities in serving both the traditional needs of the family and the demands of the modern continent.

In Angola, the commitment to educating girls received more attention after political independence in November 1975. This is illustrated by the increase in the number of women engaged in all levels of education, from literacy classes (primary education) to tertiary disciplines (universities). However, so far the highest rate of female participation in formal education has been at primary school level.

There has been a significant increase in the number of Angolan girls enrolled in primary schools since 1975. The figures from The United Nations Education Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) show that in the period between 1975 and 1980 girls comprised approximately 38% of the total student population aged 6-11 (UNESCO 1985). This figure increased to 47% in the five-year period from 1980 to 1985. Although the number of girls in school shows an annual average increase of 2.8%, there are still many girls of school age who receive no education (UNESCO 2001).

The civil war, the socio-economic conditions (including inadequate infrastructures for education), the lack of awareness within communities and families of the need to educate girls, cultural barriers and poverty, *inter alia*, all had an enormous impact on preventing girls from attending school. In other words, each one of these factors severely affected children's' access to schooling, particularly primary education for girls.

In terms of infrastructure, the war destroyed at least 4000 classrooms in Angola (OCHA IRIN: 2004). According to the same report, in early 2004 about 44% of children received no basic primary education. Although Luanda, the capital city, was not directly affected by war to the same extent as the other provinces, statistics indicate that the rate of access for girls to primary education in this particular province is nonetheless very low. This implies that although the civil conflict had played an important role in

preventing access to primary education, there are others obstacles preventing children from receiving primary education, as will be shown in chapters 4 and 5 of this study.

Currently in Angola, the Gross Enrolment Rate (GER) indicates that only 88% of girls compared to 95% of boys attend school. In Luanda, particularly, only 44% of girls of school age are enrolled in primary schools. Compounding this inequity, within this number of enrolled girls, there is an increasing dropout rate. In this study, the term 'dropout' refers to failure, repetition and weak school performance in general (OCHA IRIN: 2004a)

For instance, statistics gathered from schools during field research confirmed that a low number of girls is registered in schools. According to data collected from three different schools of study, in average there are 1,133 pupils of which 490 are girls comprising 43% of pupils registered in primary education in school number 518 in Terra Nova, a middle-class area in Luanda. In Escola Grande do Cazenga, there are even fewer girls registered compared to boys in the entire primary level, with 223 girls (33%) compared to 674 boys (67%). In schools located in upper-class areas, although there is a very slight difference, the number of girls and boys enrolled tend to be more-or-less equal. For example, in Colégio Elizangela Filomena, there are 384 pupils registered within the primary system, of which 189 are girls, comprising 49% of the pupils in primary education there.

Dropouts in primary education are a common feature of schools located in poor areas. Poor social conditions tend to hinder the retention and the success of pupils, not only in primary education, but at almost all other levels as well. Research conducted at three schools in Luanda indicates that the number of female dropouts is higher than that of boys at the same level. Yet, the field research has shown that during this academic year (2004), of 78 children who dropped out from school no. 518, 62 (79%) were girls. This gap widens in poorer areas, and especially in rural schools. This suggests that in most cases dropouts are associated with poor socio-economic conditions as well as culturally-related factors and will be discussed in chapters 4 and 6 of this study.

In impoverished areas of Luanda, due to a lack of potable water from domestic taps, coupled with other poor social and economic conditions, girls from the age of six are obliged to fetch water from very distant wells. In most cases, these wells are distantly located, sometimes up to two kilometres away. Boys rarely share these activities with girls in the same household.

In some cases, girls have the responsibility of looking after siblings while parents seek food and perform other obligations. There are also cases where one or both parents become sick and in these cases, girls must undertake the role of caregiver. She is then required to care not only for the stricken members, but also for their dependents and could include food preparation and other housework. If the girls are still of school age, they are compelled to be absent from the classroom for weeks or even months, which would probably result in failure because of missed lessons. Failure may also result from a government policy that states: "No child with a certain number of absences, without a convincing excuse can be allowed to write exams". Since most children (and girls especially) in poor areas suffer these social and economic problems, they are forced to miss classes and as a result are failed for absenteeism before the end of the first semester.

The roots of non-attendance may be found primarily in factors external to the school, such as the girl-child's social, economic, political and cultural milieu, hereafter referred to as 'out-of-school' phenomena occurring within family and community. Research shows that dropouts and repetitions, which are two sides of the same coin, are caused by in-school phenomena such as poor education facilities, teaching, teaching methods, curricular content, school administration, examinations and a lack of enthusiasm, dedication and suitable training among teachers (UNESCO 1996).

With regard to repetitions, the research also shows that the number of girls repeating each level every year is higher than that of boys. For example, in Escola Grande do

Cazenga there are 324 repeating pupils of whom 289 (89%) are girls, meaning that more girls than boys are failing each year.

This study therefore attempts to expose how gender, when associated with the above-mentioned factors, affects the access, retention and success of girls at the primary level of education in Luanda. Although I address some of the in-school problems giving rise to this gender gap, my focus lies mainly within the family and community.

1.2 Defining the problem

The aim of this study is to *explore how gender mediates the access of girls to primary education in Luanda*. Since there is a high level of illiteracy amongst girls in Luanda, this study explores how gender relations within families, communities and schools play a role in permitting or denying girls' access to primary education.

'Access', as discussed later in this study, has two meanings. Firstly, it involves formal access to primary schooling according to the Admissions policy and requirements. In this sense, it means that learners are admitted to schools regardless of their subsequent performance, achievement or success. Secondly, besides formal access, it also entails epistemic access, which means retention and achievement once formally admitted to schools (Morrow 1993:34). In addition, the study addresses the main factors that affect epistemic access.

Against this background, the research question is framed as follows: **How does gender mediate the access of girls to primary education?**

In engaging this question, the study explores the following issues:

- Factors enabling or preventing the entrée of girls to primary education;
- Retention and success of those girls who do gain access to primary education;

- ♦ The gender relations prevailing within families and schools, and how these relations influence girls' behaviour and performance.

The existing literature points to some of the *challenges* and *experiences* girls face once they gain access to schooling, some of which may include absenteeism as a result of family responsibilities that girls may have to assume at an early age (Odinile 1999:23). For example, the literature indicates, there are circumstances requiring girls to be out of the classroom for days or weeks on end because they have to care for their siblings or sick parent/s (Clifford 2001:43).

In some cases, challenges and experiences at school cause girls to drop out. They may, for example, be required to perform maintenance or cleaning tasks at school, while the teachers and boys use the time for academic work or leisure. This study examines these experiences, as well as the pedagogical practices that underpin them.

1.3 Rationale

With this study, I intend to add to the debate in the literature concerning the relationship between gender and cultural dimensions that informs the education of girls, particularly at primary level. Most literature, particularly from such international bodies as the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), emphasises the vast difference between boys and girls in terms of access, retention and performance at primary schools in developing countries.

While the literature discusses the impact of social discrimination in this process, it tends to overlook the role of gender relations, cultural dimensions, and the implications of retention and success of girls in primary schools, as well in the family and community. By examining the complexities of gender and access of girls to primary education in Luanda, this study offers a theoretical and contextual dimension to our understanding of the issues of formal and epistemic entrée of girls to primary education.

1.4 Outline of Chapters

In an attempt to inform the various issues surrounding the low access (both formal and epistemic) and dropout rates of girls in Angola, particularly in Luanda, the study discusses important key themes that will advance the understanding of all issues and obstacles, including gender, that prevent the access of girls to primary schools in Luanda.

To this end, chapter 2: *Gender Theory and Schooling for Girls*, provides a comprehensive conjectural discourse based on various gender theories, as well as gender roles both within communities and families; it will present possible solutions to the barriers affecting girls. In addition, this chapter debates the schooling of girls according to views of international bodies such as UNESCO and UNICEF, as well as international treaties such the Convention on Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), adopted in 1979 at the Fourth World Conference on Women and at the Convention on the Right of the Child, and discusses formal access and epistemic access of girls to primary education.

Chapter 3: *Methodology*. In this chapter the study presents the methodology employed in researching this study. According to Neuman (2000), methodology is a set of methods or techniques used to conduct research. For this purpose, Life history approach was used with households from different socio-economic Backgrounds. Besides, interviews were conducted with parents and households from the lower-class, middle-class and upper-class strata in the province of Luanda. Participatory observations were also carried out in different schools from different social strata.

This chapter is divided into three main sections: The first section discuss the research design, which involves an extensive literature review, a documentary analysis based on previous research (research reports, thesis), articles, Angolan government reports, UNICEF and UNESCO reports on the education of girls, and government policies on

gender and education. The last segment of this chapter describes the case studies conducted for this report.

The second section of this chapter provides the data collection techniques by explaining the different qualitative methods used to gather the information for this study. For instance, it discusses in detail the interviews, life histories and observations used during the fieldwork. The last part of the chapter elaborates on the techniques used to analyse the data collected during the research.

Chapter 4: *Contextual Issues* specifies the contextual problems affecting girls' access to primary education. The aim of this chapter is to provide an insight to the social and economic conditions that ultimately affect the way in which education for girls is perceived and prioritised in Angola, especially in Luanda and in particular within families and communities.. It also looks at the distribution of primary schools within the socio-economic environment of Luanda.

To locate the study within the socio-economic context is an important factor in analysing how various circumstances such as poverty, lack of facilities, parents' backgrounds and parents' attitudes towards education, both for boys and girls, may significantly impact on girls' access to education, including primary education. These are some of the questions addressed in this chapter:

How does the socio-economic context contribute to preventing or enabling girls to access primary education? Can parents afford the costs involved in keeping a daughter at primary school?

The chapter focuses on the following key issues: Constraints on girls' access to primary education in Angola and particularly in Luanda. This involves the contextual background of Angola and why it impedes girls from gaining access to primary education. These constraints include school infrastructures, poverty, cultural practices, safety/insecurity problems, corruption at school level that affects education quality and

consequently, the retention and achievement of children, including girls, at all levels of education, particularly in primary education.

Chapter 5: Government Policies Towards Education for Girls. This chapter describes the reforms that the Angolan government is implementing, which mainly aim to improve both the quality of education and equitable access in terms of gender. The main focus of these policies is primary education as the basis of development in any society (Chinapah 2000:1). The main argument is that a range of policies and reforms has been proposed by international donors in order to reduce public expenditure at the same time as improving the education systems in developing countries.

There are many criticisms of how those reforms are implemented, and in some instances, on the failure to implement those reforms at all. However, the critics and other donors fail to take into consideration the realities in different countries. A reform that works in one country may not work in another, and donors therefore need to take this into account.

This chapter also discusses the following key themes: competitiveness-driven reforms, finance-driven reforms, equity-driven reforms, the reforms that the Angolan government has chosen to follow and the challenges that Angola faces in implementing them.

Chapter 6: Gender Relations: Barriers and Access of Girls to Primary Education. The aim of this chapter is to provide an analysis of the data collected during the field research. The findings are presented in three main categories that will elucidate the circumstances and obstacles surrounding the access of girls to primary education.

The three categories are as follows: (1) Barriers constraining girls' education in Luanda, (2) Parental background and (3) Government policies concerning girls' education. In presenting the obstacles that affect girls' access to primary education in Luanda, the study classifies them according to the following elements: [(i) *School-related factors*,

which includes all aspects within a school that may affect formal or epistemic access in primary schools. These may include the nature of the curricula, teaching and learning methodologies, inappropriate pedagogies, e.g. pedagogies that exclude girls or promote boys' dominance, the type of classroom leadership, school and classroom infrastructure and conditions, as well as corporal and verbal punishment (Yates 1990:101).

The following questions are addressed: Do teaching manuals facilitate the same learning levels for boys and girls? Do teachers evaluate boys and girls equally?

- (ii) *Security/safety-related factors*, such as war, crime, and lack of safety on the roads.
- (iii) *Poverty-related factors*, such as lack of financial resources; distances from homes to schools; health problems; pressure to sustain and generate income for the family;
- (iv) *Culture-related factors*, which include the subservient role of women within families and the community; male dominance over women and so forth; and
- (v) parental background, which includes the level of education parents have attained and their cultural background, as both play an important role in shaping their attitudes towards education for boys and girls.

The chapter addresses the following questions:

What are the duties that girls must perform within the household on a daily basis? How are domestic chores distributed within the household? Are girls close to their mothers and do they help their mothers with domestic activities? How does domestic work affect girls' homework routine? How do parents encourage girls to cope with their homework while occupied with domestic work? At community level, what is the economic and social position of girls/women?

Chapter 7: Conclusion and Recommendation. This chapter presents a conclusion of the study and at the same time, provides some recommendations aimed at improving girls' access to primary education. The conclusion drawn from my research is that the lower the parents' education level, the lower the expectations are concerning girls' education.

By contrast, those parents who have attained at least a secondary level of education have a more enlightened attitude towards girls' education.

In other words, parents with higher levels of education have a higher probability of sending their children to school, regardless of gender. The lower the parents' education level, the less the probability of sending daughters to school since they are unaware of or ignore the importance of education, both within family and to society as whole. Besides, lower education levels result in people identifying closely with cultural beliefs and practices, which at the same time drive them to justify their attitudes towards gender and education.

Chapter Two: Gender Theories and Schooling for Girls

2.1 Introduction

Education has been recognised internationally as crucial to development. The United Nations International Children's Fund (UNICEF), for instance, along with international partners, is launching a campaign for developing and poor countries to overcome the obstacles that young children, particularly girls, face in enrolling to basic education. In doing so, UNICEF is helping those poor nations to achieve broader development and potential.

UNICEF estimates that "more than 120 million school-aged children are denied their right to go to school and the majority of them are girls" (UNICEF 2002: 15a). It also believes that every girl left out of school suffers a lifetime loss of opportunity. She is less able to develop to her full potential and is more vulnerable to poverty, exploitation and HIV/AIDS (UNICEF, 2002:15b).

The aim of this chapter is to present a hypothetical discussion on various gender theories regarding education, as well as review the available literature reflecting the reality of education for children in general and education for girls in particular, including the most common causes of low access. My literature review focuses on the way in which gender mediates the access and success of girls to primary education in Luanda, and centres on the following topics:

- Social and cultural construction of gender
- The role of gender in families and schools
- The main conceptualisations of access in education, namely formal and epistemic access, which informs the retention and success or achievements of girls in primary education

- Socio-cultural beliefs and practices and their relationship to the education of girls
- The socio-economic conditions within families and communities that prevent girls from accessing primary education, and
- Strategies for improving girls' access to education.

The body of literature that links the cultural background and the access to and retention of girls in primary education reveals specific obstacles that prevent girls from receiving and maintaining primary education – this being the ‘demand’ aspect of education. This has to be viewed within the context of inclusion, the willingness of students to learn, and teachers’ inclusive methodologies and strategies.

2.2 Gender Approaches in Education

Over the years gender and education has become more and more debatable, engaging the attention of sociologists, educationists, development experts and specialists from other fields. This is because education is the heart of development of societies that cannot progress without the contribution of their people: men *and* women.

However, because African societies are male-dominated, not all of them view education, particularly for girls, as an important asset. There is thus a continuous struggle to inculcate a mindset that sees the education of children, including girls, as vital for development. This has led scholars from different schools of thought to reassess gender roles and integrate education so that prevailing attitudes towards education and gender within societies can change.

Bourdieu (1991:31) defines gender as “... a complex set of systems of personal and social relations of domination and power, through which women (girls) are socially created and maintained and they gain access to (or are allocated) status, power and material resources within society”. Tickner (1992:2), on the other hand, defines gender as “... the set of culturally shaped and defined characteristics associated with masculinity and femininity”. Paechter (1998:23) argues that gender identity refers to a

person's innate feelings about whether they are male, female, both or neither, while 'gender role' refers to a set of behaviour prescriptions for individuals who have a particular assigned gender. These will vary between cultures.

However, in line with this study, the above three definitions have an important impact in framing the way gender relations within society distinguish men and women. All agree that gender is socially and culturally shaped. Bourdieu (1992:41) goes further by saying that this complex set of systems of personal and social relations of domination and power, which is gender, determine the access that one may or may not have to power and material resources within the society.

In light of this study, for a society such as Angola, which is largely male-dominated, gender has a significant role in determining the allocation of power and resources, including education and other political, social and economic assets. This is one of the reasons why Angolan schools record lower numbers of girls and women compared to boys and men in both rural and urban areas. This gender bias is the basis of the arguments in this study.

Sex and gender are very important aspects of our personal identity - fundamental to how we perceive both others and ourselves. "When a child is born, we want to know immediately if it is a boy or a girl, and the way we react to this information is based on a whole set of cultural and social assumptions about the individual's gendered future" (Paechter 1998: 38). Our assumptions about child's future are more closely linked to social and cultural values than to its physical attributes. Consequently, the complexity of sex, gender identity and gender roles results in socially-produced power asymmetries that give false 'scientific' support to prevailing gender inequalities in many societies, particularly African societies.

The false scientific support to prevailing gender inequality is the result and/or the cause of socially and culturally shaped gender roles and power relations. The role of men/women in society is always shaped by the cultural and social perceptions of

gender. In most societies, including the west, men performed or still perform different roles from those of women and these tend to be unequal. This means that because gender-role differences are so bound up with personal power relations, their construction is asymmetrical in a number of ways.

These socially constructed asymmetries are not only seen within family, but also in schools where discrimination against girls exists. Yates (1990:12) and Paechter (1998:58), in their arguments on gender and education, emphasise the fact that in most schools in the developing world, particularly in primary education, girls are separated from boys in terms of leisure.

When there is leisure-time in schools, there is a tendency, which has already become a habit with teachers, to give boys a ball and send them to the football field, while girls are given 'easier' games, such as skipping. Regarding the issues of teaching and learning, Odenile (1999:12) notes that life skills activities within classrooms in Africa tend to emphasise gender discrimination. The school curriculum is clearly defined: while girls learn to sew, embroider, cook and do other domestic activities, boys are engaged in learning other arts and crafts. During leisure time, in children's fantasies, boys play games like driving a car, which identifies them as fathers/men, while girls tend to play the role of mother, sitting at home playing with the children and cooking for the family. This illustrates that in most African countries, the school curriculum does not attempt to eliminate gender constraints or retain girls, or to encourage them to succeed. Instead, it is likely to undermine their self-confidence, which is further eroded when teaching materials portray girls and women as 'lesser beings' than men. Teachers sometimes allow boys to make fun of girls, solely because they are girls.

2.3 Schooling for Girls: General Trends

Gender accounts of education for women and girls can be found in various disciplines, such as sociology of education, gender and education, among others. From the early 1990s, the history of female education is specifically discussed in liberal feminist literature, which emphasises the following: first, the schooling of females has been

regarded until very recently as being of secondary importance to that of males, and has been developed in a way which both shadows and holds up a feminised mirror to a masculine-centred education system. This is even reflected in the language used. For example, in the United States, female students are referred to as 'co-eds', suggesting that the males are those at whom the courses are primarily aimed (Shaw 1989: 185).

Second, education for girls has been developed along gender-specific lines, which has in many cases disadvantaged girls by excluding them from particular forms of knowledge, if only by taking up their time with other, less powerful forms (Ballara 1991: 34). Finally, attitudes to girls' education are bound up with ideas of female embodiment, so, that until recently, education was seen as incompatible with the physical well-being of their bodies. For instance, during the 19th century, childbearing was considered a national duty and middle-class women in particular were educated to be better mothers, using acquired education to oversee their children, i.e. giving children moral and behavioural education (Paechter 1998: 58a).

Those assumptions of the 19th century, in which girls would be prepared for their future roles as mothers and wives, to a large extent shaped 20th century girls' education in Europe, particularly in England. Thus, throughout history, the school curriculum has been formulated for men and boys and *adapted* for girls and women. At the same time, perceptions about the schooling of girls were persistently influenced by conceptions of the role of women in broader society (Cole 1989:30).

The same attitudes prevailed in Latin America. For example, Ballara (1992:33) notes that in Latin America in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, enormous emphasis was given to domestic subjects for women of all classes. As Shaw (1989:54) noted, these trends acted together to bring about an elementary curriculum in which girls had to spend half of the time in their final year on domestic subjects, thereby excluding girls from other studies; boys were usually taught elementary arithmetic while girls did needlework.

Heneveld and Craig (1996:61) in their studies on primary education in sub-Saharan Africa, argue that the same ideology persists to the present day. Schools in sub-Saharan Africa still teach girls that their main objective is preparation for a passive, caring role, both at home and at work, so girls are encouraged to regard themselves as second-class or servants. As in the past, education in domesticity is used to exclude many girls from the higher forms of knowledge, and in many poor societies, particularly in male-dominated ones, it is still the cultural basis of exclusion of girls in primary education. Epistemic and formal access of girls to education is still barred on the basis that women can only play a caring role.

2.4 Formal and Epistemic Access

The issue of enrolment is itself vague. This may be because enrolment levels do not match the access, retention and success of students/pupils in schools. For example, concerning entrance to a university, the fact that a student enrolls does not guarantee his/her acceptance or his/her success in a prescribed timeframe. Thus, in order to gain entrance, students have to fulfil certain requirements to assure a place. This may be the scenario in public schools in Luanda, where the number of children who enrol may be greater than the number children who gain access. Likewise, gaining access does not necessarily mean *being* at school or *continuing* in school. At the same time, retention in school does not assure the success or achievement of students in primary education. This is where the distinction between formal and epistemic access should be clarified.

However, first it is necessary to define the key terms. Clifford (2001:12) defines 'access' as: "... the entrance and admittance process". In terms of schooling, Moser (1996:21) defines it as the acceptance and the right of entry into educational institutions. This is to say that the access of children to schools comes after their formal enrolment. However, this is only formal access, whereas epistemic access implies more than admission. Epistemic access means access and retention, which increases the chances of succeeding at schools.

In line with Morrow (1993:31), the study distinguishes important aspects related to access: the formal aspect of access (enrolment) and the epistemic aspect of access (retention and success) of girls in primary education. According to Morrow (1981:27), once students have gained entrance to the school, the challenge is to ensure that the school environment and practices assist them in achieving epistemic access, i.e. retention and educational success. Formal access refers to enrolment and entrance to the educational institution, while epistemic access refers to the success achieved within a prescribed timeframe.

In many societies, the major concern is the epistemic access itself, rather than the formal access, meaning that if a child encounters one of the above-mentioned barriers imposed by society, school or family, his/her epistemic access could be at risk. Gaining formal access may not be difficult for children in certain areas, while the epistemic access may be more difficult due to certain conditions imposed by other factors.

Clifford (2001:22) considers the process of accessibility to be an important facet of education, including girls' education. He argues that accessibility is one of state's obligations to its citizens: "State should ensure the access to available public schools, most importantly in accordance with the existing prohibition of discrimination" (Clifford 2001:23).

Yet, with regard to girls, the right and access to education has been demonstrated to act as a "corrective to the free market" (Ribichi 1987:45). The Angolan government, like any other government, has an obligation to provide access to primary education, because at that level education should not be treated as a commodity, but as human right.

There is a growing acceptance of the necessity for the state's intervention concerning access to primary education for girls. Ribichi (1987:34) refers to the reason for state intervention as a "market failure", where there is unwillingness by parents to send their

daughters to primary school because of the absence of an economic motive to invest in their education.

Thus, the demand for girls' primary education has to be created by providing an economic incentive to parents. However, one problem with this approach could be conflicting expectations for girls that deprive them of access to primary education. For example, if they have to perform household duties, the school schedule has to be adapted to the daily rhythm of domestic work. Since poor families depend on the work of each member for their survival, combining school and work becomes necessary to make school accessible for girls.

As the existing literature indicates, enhancing girls' access to primary education necessitates a considerable investment that goes beyond financial resources. It implies that government boosts its capacity to address the issues of gender relations and cultural dimensions that prevent girls from accessing the primary education.

However, as it was discussed earlier in this study, access is not enough for a student to achieve success at school. For that, retention is an important aspect. According to the Clifford (2001:31), *retention* means, among many things, maintenance and keeping in possession. In terms of education, one defines children's retention in school as the continuity of attendance. It would also mean that children should not only be enrolled, but should continue with their schooling on a regular basis, which is the essence of epistemic access.

Similarly, retention does not necessarily guarantee success. This is demonstrated by the high failure rate in primary education in Luanda. The process of going to school regularly may not be sufficient for girls to attain their primary education. Since the failure rate among girls in primary education is very high, one may ask if there is any cultural dimension preventing the success of girls in some schools, as opposed to their doing well in others? How do gender relations mediate the achievements or non-

achievements of girls in primary education in Luanda? The answers to these questions are found in chapter 6 of this study.

Separate from retention, girls, more than boys, are vulnerable to the 'dropout' phenomenon. In Angola there is a high dropout rate amongst students at primary schools and as this number increases, it continues to be higher amongst girls. 'Dropout' refers to discontinuity of schooling before the completion of the academic cycle or educational level. In most cases, children, including girls, are enrolled, but after few years and before the conclusion of a certain level, they simply give up.

The levels of dropouts in Africa are increasing considerably and so are the reasons behind them. According to Valencia (1991:54), dropping out may occur as result of lack of incentive, class failure or repetition, distance from home to school, lack of sufficient time to cope with domestic and school activities, gender-related factors and some educational conditions that may occur inside or outside of the schools.

Lockheed & Verspoor (1991:83) indicate that fewer than 60% of children entering school in low-income countries and about 70% of those entering school in low-middle-income countries reach the final year of primary school. Rose et al (2002:11) noted that a significant number of children who enrol in the first grade do not complete primary school in sub-Saharan Africa and that dropout rates are high at the primary level in general, with more girls dropping out than boys.

Generically, the low enrolment and access of girls in both rural and urban areas blocks national development. Investments in girls' education have proven to give high returns, enabling them to fulfil their potential and their rights as children, and later as women. Educated girls can also contribute to the development of a society by slowing population growth and enhancing the economic productivity of the nation, and as mothers, they are better at ensuring their children's well-being.

Access to good-quality primary schooling is of central importance to national development (Colclough & Lewin 1993:28). Nevertheless, it is still far from being universally available. In fact, only about three quarters of eligible children attend primary school in developing countries. Furthermore, many schools offer an education of very poor quality (The World Bank 2002). According to Heneveld and Craig (1996:42), in 1990 those who were out of school equalled about one million girls and boys, with 71% of them being girls from sub-Saharan Africa.

In the 1960s, UNESCO, recognising the very real problem of children, particularly girls, in developing countries not achieving basic literacy, set up a goal whereby children had to achieve the universal primary education by 1980 at the latest. After the 1980s the number of children out-of-school in developing countries, including in Angola, grew considerably, and again, girls were the most affected group (UNESCO 1989).

There were many reasons for failure. School systems did not expand rapidly, while in most countries, population growth escalated at much higher rates than had been forecast in the 1960s. Besides, many countries in sub-Saharan Africa were involved in civil wars in the 1970s. Angola, for example, was preoccupied in a civil conflict that destroyed its infrastructures, including schools.

These factors, combined with the cut in expenditure on education due to structural adjustment, imposed by the World Bank and International Monetary Fund, pose more difficulties in the quantitative task of providing universal primary education to all disadvantaged children. The above factors not only had an impact on the quantitative attainments but also a huge impact on the quality of education, as is discussed in chapters 4 and 6 of this study.