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Teacher attitudes on teaching about gender in the classroom and their interpretation and teaching of Things fall apart

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Abstract

This research report examines whether English teachers believe that gender-related issues should be dealt with in the classroom. It is also concerned with what the relationship is between their beliefs and their interpretation and espoused teaching methods for Chinua Achebe's 1958 novel *Things Fall Apart*. The study stemmed from an interest in teachers' perceptions of gender-related issues and whether their teaching materials (such as the novel in question) and feminist theories and pedagogies could be used as a means to promote gender equality. Five teachers were interviewed in one-on-one semi-structured interviews and asked to provide the researcher with the classroom activities and formal assessments they use when teaching the novel. Data from the interview transcripts and formal assessments suggested that there was a relationship between the teacher's beliefs about gender and their espoused teaching practices. Data from their classroom activities showed that in general, teachers aimed to help the learners to remember and understand key events in the novel as well as the main character, Okonkwo. It seemed that teachers chose to deal more closely with the themes of the novel in their essay questions rather than the classroom activities. It was difficult to determine the nature of the relationship between each teacher's beliefs and their classroom activities because they did not create the activities themselves. Most of the teachers simply used existing questions found in the version of *Things Fall Apart* used in their schools. It is recommended that teacher training should include training pre-service teachers to use feminist pedagogies in addition to the other types of methodologies they are already being taught to use. Workshops are recommended for in-service teachers.