

## **Education in A Gender Equality Perspective**

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### **Abstract**

The terms “equality” .... “equal,” and “equally” signify a qualitative relationship. ‘Equality’ (or ‘equal’) signifies correspondence between groups of different objects, persons, processes or circumstances that have the same qualities in at least one respect, but not all respects, i.e., regarding one specific feature, with differences in other features ..... ‘Equality’ denotes the relation between the objects that are compared. (Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, 2007).

Gender equality, therefore, denotes the relationship of correspondence between men and women. It implies that, in spite of differences, men and women are similar in many aspects. They have not same but similar needs, aspirations, feelings, interests etc. and therefore should have equal rights and opportunities to develop their abilities and make choices.

As far as Gender Equality is concerned, most important stakeholders in Education are students and parents and their educational needs in this regard are different, so specially designed programmes are required for a boy, a girl, a mother and a father. In this paper the investigator has analyzed the present Educational provisions in India and accordingly suggested need- specific components of Gender Equality Education.

**Key Words:** Gender Equality, Gender Equality Perspective of Education

### **Introduction**

Education is a process of a positive change in behavior of the individual. The notion of this’ positive change in behavior ‘has philosophical, psychological, socio-cultural and political contexts. For example if the society regards Equality as a principle of quality life , then education is the process of knowing and understanding the concept of equality, developing faith in it, forming a positive attitude towards it, accepting it as a value and behaving according to it in every field of life.

The terms “equality” .... “equal,” and “equally” signify a qualitative relationship. ‘Equality’ (or ‘equal’) signifies correspondence between groups of different objects, persons, processes or circumstances that have the same qualities in at least one respect, but not all respects, i.e., regarding one specific feature, with differences in other features ‘Equality’ needs to thus be distinguished from ‘identity’ .... Thus, to say e.g. that men are equal is not to say that they are identical. Equality implies similarity rather than ‘sameness.’ ..... ‘Equality’ denotes the relation between the objects that are compared. (Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, 2007).

Gender equality, therefore, denotes the relationship of correspondence between men and women. It implies that, in spite of differences, men and women are similar in many aspects. They have not same but similar needs, aspirations, feelings, interests etc. and therefore should have equal rights and opportunities to develop their abilities and make choices.

Gender Equality is one of the important goals of Education at global level. It is expected that education at all levels i.e. child, adolescent and adult and all forms i.e. Formal, non-formal and informal, should incorporate Gender Equality as an important concern.

### **Major Stakeholders in Education and Gender Equality**

Stakeholders in Education include administrators, teachers, students, parents, families, community members, local business leaders, school board members, city councilors, state representatives, cultural institutions, teachers unions, parent-teacher organizations, media etc. As far as Gender Equality is concerned, most important stakeholders in Education are students and parents.

Findings of a survey in Rural China suggest that 'mothers' gender attitudes are closely linked to educational aspirations for daughters. Gender bias in the mothers' aspirations is more pronounced among those mothers who hold traditional gender values. Moreover, mothers of boys respond more strongly to the child's engagement in school when forming their educational aspirations for the child than do mothers of girls. We find that mothers' educational aspirations for children conditions subsequent school persistence. Moreover, differences in maternal aspirations help explain gender differences in subsequent enrollment. For a boy, what matters most for his school persistence is the family's economic situation; in contrast, grades matter for girls. Girls benefit both from mothers' higher aspirations and from mothers' own education.' (Le Yuping Zhang, Kao Grace & Kao Emily C. Hannum, 2007)

Ideas about manhood are deeply ingrained in our society. From an early age, boys are socialized into gender roles designed to keep men in power. And they grow up believing that dominant behavior towards girls and women is part of being a man. Since gender stereotypes are pervasive and operate throughout a lifetime, a life cycle-based approach is required to transform the way men and boys socialize in their surroundings - home, education, workplace, economy, etc. Life cycle-based approach should start with early childhood education and care. Here, mothers have a crucial role in educating boys in how to treat their female partners. (Smile Foundation, No date).

Men and boys live in social relationships, many with women and girls: wives, partners, mothers, aunts, daughters, nieces, friends, classmates, workmates, professional colleagues, neighbors, and so on. The quality of every man's life depends to a large extent on the quality of those relationships. Living in a system of gender inequality which limits or damages the lives of the women and girls concerned, inevitably degrades the lives of the men and boys too. (Connel, R.W., 2003)

Children, women, and men benefit when fathers take parental leave. While maternity leave is now offered in nearly all countries, only 92 countries offer leave that can be taken by new fathers; in half of these countries, the leave is less than three weeks. Well-designed leave policies, when combined with free or affordable childcare, show the strongest potential for shifting the care burden. Leave for fathers is a vital step toward recognition of the importance of sharing care-giving for children, and it is an important means of promoting the well-being of children and gender equality in the home, the workplace, and society as a whole. In the United Kingdom, fathers who took leave after birth were 19 percent more likely to participate in feedings and to get up with the baby at night eight to 12 months later, as compared with fathers who did not take leave. Furthermore, leave for fathers also appears to lead to improved maternal health including mental health and reduced parenting stress. (Levtov R, van der Gaag N, Greene M, Kaufman M, and Barker G., 2015).

The Involved Father and Gender Equality Project was a collaborative effort between the White Ribbon Campaign and Dad Central and sought to research the links between the activities of involved fathers, gender equality and the positive impact of involved fathering on families and communities. Fathers in this study indicate that their involvement with their children promotes gender equality in many ways. Fathers are role modeling gender equality with their children and understand the importance of having conversations about equality with their children. Fathers in this study also suggest that a change is occurring in relationships, where equality is more present within their relationships than ever before. (White Ribbon Campaign, 2014).

The Fatherhood Institute, founded in 1999, is one of the most respected fatherhood organizations in the world. It is a registered UK charity, which focuses on policy, research and practice and its vision is of a society in which there's a great dad for every child – a society that:

- Gives All Children A Strong And Positive Relationship With Their Father And Any Father-Figures
- Supports Both Mothers And Fathers As Earners And Carers, And
- Prepares Boys And Girls For A Future Shared Role In Caring For Children.

In Sweden, an increase in fathers' share of parental leave countrywide over time was paralleled by a downward trend in children's injury rates (age 0-4 years)..... Five-year-olds with two supportive parents score higher on language development than those with one or no supportive parents.(Fatherhood Institute,2016)

National Fatherhood Initiative is US non-profit organization founded in 1994. Its mission is creating a world in which every child has a 24/7 Dad, **working to end father absence, transforming organizations and communities by equipping them to intentionally and proactively engage fathers in their children's lives. Its vision is for every child to grow up with an involved, responsible, and committed father.**(National Fatherhood Initiatives,1994)

It is evident from this review that, it is essential to consider girls, boys, mothers and fathers as separate groups of stakeholders in Education, as far as Gender equality is concerned.

### **Present Educational Policies in India and Gender Equality**

In conformity with the global policies of Gender Equality, National Policy on Education (1986) identified Gender Equality as one of the ten core areas of Education and accordingly steps were and are being taken for mainstreaming Gender Equality in Formal Education System. Educational Policies and Programmes for Gender Equality are mainly related to access, curriculum, teaching-learning processes and outcomes. In the Educational policies such as Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (2000), Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan(2009), Rashtriya Uchatar Shiksha Abhiyan (RUSA, 2013) special guidelines are found for Girls' Education. However, Gender Equality in the context of 'relationship of correspondence between a male and a female ' is not appropriately considered in those policies. Especially the content of Education is not specialized as per the needs of a boy and a girl. For example, only the girl, and not the boy, is expected to do the household chores such as cooking, cleaning, sweeping etc. and serve the food to boys and men in the family, therefore, the educational needs of a boy and girl in the context of Gender Equality are different. The Educational Policies do not emphasize these special needs.

### **Formal Education Curriculum and Gender Equality**

School Education Curriculum (from I to X) (NCERT, 2006) consists of the following components related to Gender Equality.

#### **Languages**

- Literary work related to past, present and future of Gender Equality in the society e.g. Poetry, fiction, Non-fiction, drama etc.
- Biographies and Autobiographies of the male and female Social Reformers (their contribution to Gender Equality)

#### **Social Sciences (History, Civics, Geography, Economics and Politics)**

- History of Gender Equality
- Fights for Gender Equality: Contribution of the male and female Social Reformers
- Equality as a Fundamental Right: Constitutional Provisions
- Gender Equality in Different Cultures
- Gender Related issues and resolutions
- Role of Women in Economic Development
- Role of Women in Politics

## Science

- Human Biology
- Contribution of Women Scientists

As mentioned earlier all these topics are general and to be taught to boys and girls in common. However, as mentioned earlier, there are several aspects of Gender Equality which should be specifically and separately taught to boys and girls.

## Parent Education and Gender Equality

As compared to developed countries, trend of Parent Education in India is only in an emerging stage. We can find a prominent movement of Parent Education in Metropolitan cities such as Delhi, Mumbai, Pune, Bangalore etc. However, it has not reached that prominently in small cities and towns; villages are obviously far away from it.

Programmes of Parent Education in India include Orientations, Coaching Classes, Certificate Courses, PG Diploma Courses, Post Graduate Courses etc. Again these programmes are of general nature, meant for a mother and a father in common, and therefore deal with general parenting topics such as Child Psychology, Understanding the Child, Parenting Styles, Health and Hygiene, Parent-Child Relationship, Positive Parenting etc. Gender Equality is, of course, a component of these courses; however, as in developed countries, need-specific Educational Programmes for mothers and fathers have not been developed in a form of a trend.

## Need of a Need - Specific Gender Equality Education in India

Girls between 5 and 14 years old spend 40 per cent more time, or 160 million more hours a day, on unpaid household chores and collecting water and firewood compared to boys their age, according to a report released by UNICEF ahead of International Day of the Girl on 11 October... The report also found that: Girls between 10 and 14 years old in South Asia and the Middle East and North Africa spend nearly double the amount of time on household chores compared to boys. (UNICEF, October, 2016).

India ranks 130<sup>th</sup> out of 188 Countries on Gender Inequality Index(GII) which is a composite measure reflecting inequality in achievement between women and men in three dimensions of Human Development : Reproductive Health, measured by maternal mortality ratio and adolescent birth rates; Empowerment, measured by proportion of parliamentary seats occupied by females and proportion of adult females and males aged 25 years and older with at least some secondary education; and Economic Status, expressed as labor market participation and measured by labor force participation rate of female and male populations aged 15 years and older(UNDP,2015) .

In some parts of India, it's traditional to greet a family with a newborn girl by saying, "The servant of your household has been born." A girl can't help but feel inferior when everything around her tells her that she is worth less than a boy. Her identity is forged as soon as her family and society limit her opportunities and declare her to be second-rate. A combination of extreme poverty and deep biases against women creates a remorseless cycle of discrimination that keeps girls in developing countries from living up to their full potential. It also leaves them vulnerable to severe physical and emotional abuse. These "servants of the household" come to accept that life will never be any different. (Mullins Jullie, 2008)

Taking into consideration this situation in India, there should be provisions for specific Gender Equality Education for Girls, Boys, Mothers and Fathers. The Essential components of this education should be as follows.

## Girls' Education

- Higher Aspirations for Self-development
- Defining self – development and preparing plans for it

- Communicating aspirations and problems to teachers, mother, father, brother and other family members
- Asking help from brother, father and other family members in household chores
- Time Management : Household chores and overall Personality Development
- Values of self- protection and self- confidence
- Struggle for Existence and Survival of the fittest

#### **Boys' Education**

- Self-dependence , not expecting sister or a mother to do his own work
- Defining self – development and preparing plans for it
- Equal Share in household chores , No Gender discrimination
- Helping mother, sister and other girls and women in their work
- Values of Self-restraint, Respect for Women, Gender Equity, Non-violence etc.
- Understanding the problems of Women

#### **Mothers' Education**

- Equally High Aspirations for a boy and a girl
- Educating a boy in how to treat the female partners
- Involving boys and fathers in household chores and care-giving
- Non- discrimination between a male and a female
- Providing Equal Opportunities for Girls' and Boys' Education

#### **Fathers' Education**

- Modeling Gender Equality at home
- Paternal Care and related skills
- Share in household chores and care- giving
- Non- discrimination between male and a female
- Providing Equal Opportunities for Girls' and Boys' Education

Theory and practical related to the above mentioned components should be organized for respective groups.

#### **Formal and Non-Formal Modes**

For Gender Equality Education of Girls and Boys both formal and non-formal modes are essential whereas for that of Mothers and Fathers non-formal modes will have to be used. Obviously, joint and integrated efforts of Government and Non-Government agencies of Education are required for an inclusive, comprehensive and effective Gender Equality Education.

#### **Concluding Remarks**

In this paper has the author has analyzed the present Educational provisions in India with reference to Gender Equality. It is found that formal education policies in India do emphasize Gender Equality. But this emphasis is general, common for girls and boys and not need-specific. Further, Parenthood Education is itself an inadequately spread concern in India, so the Motherhood and Fatherhood education for Gender Equality is far away in India. If we truly want to establish Gender Equality in our society, we will have to carefully plan and impart both general and need-specific Gender Equality Education for girls, boys, mothers and fathers.

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