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Gender Equality and Higher Education

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Abstract

Gender Sensitization is one basic requirement for the normal development of an individual. Without being sensitive to the needs of particular gender, an individual may refrain from understanding the opposite gender and in some acute cases even him or herself. Women power is crucial to the economic growth of any country. In India efforts or being made to empower women so that there is equal participation of women in economic growth of the country. Reformation in society with special reference to gender difference is possible only through gender sensitization. This paper explains the need of gender sensitization in educational institutions and strategies to be adopted in school to promote gender sensitization. It also describes different programs developed to deal with various genders related issues.

Key words – Gender Equality, gender sensitization, Education

Introduction

“In fact, there is perhaps only one Human being in a thousand who is passionately interested in his job for the job’s sake. The difference is that if that one person in a thousand in a man, we say, simply that he is passionately keen on his job; if she is a woman, we say she is a freak.” – Dorothy.L.Sayers.

Gender sensitization presides over gender sensitivity which refers to the modification of behavior by raising awareness of gender equality concerns. This can be achieved by conducting various sensitization campaigns, training centers, workshop, programs etc. Sensitization in the domain of Humanities and Social Sciences, is seen as an awareness informed propensity or disposition which aims at changing behavior so that it is sensitive to certain issues. Gender sensitization may be seen as "the awareness informed disposition or propensity to behave in a manner which is sensitive to gender justice and gender equality issues." It is interlinked with gender empowerment. Gender sensitization theories claim that modification of the behavior of teachers and parents (etc.) towards children which can have a causal effect on gender equality.

Meaning Of Concepts

Gender refers to the socio cultural differences between the males and females in terms of their strength, ability, performance, wage earning capacity and social acceptability etc. In fact the biological process does not discriminate between man and woman, but socially, women are regarded as weak, need protection and hence become subordinate to men.

Sensitization refers to theories which claim that modification of the behavior of teachers and parents (etc.) towards children can have a causal effect on gender equality. Gender sensitizing "is about changing behavior and instilling empathy into the views that we hold about our own and the other sex." It helps people in "examining their personal attitudes and beliefs and questioning the 'realities' they thought they know."

UNESCO Defines Higher Education is that it contributes to the development of evidence-based higher education policies. To this end, the New World Conference on the Degree of Higher Education Graduation is under construction.

Concept Of Higher Education

Higher education is the higher education that leads to higher education. Tertiary education, also called post-secondary education, tertiary or higher education, is the final option for formal education that takes place after graduation. Represents levels 6, 7 and 8 of the 2011 version of the Global Standard Standards for Education. Tertiary education is sometimes referred to as further education or further education as opposed to higher education. The right to higher education is enshrined in many human rights structures. The 1966 UN Convention on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights states that, in Article 13, "higher education shall be equally accessible to all, on the basis of merit, by appropriate means, and in particular through the continued introduction of free education". In Europe, Article 2 of the First European Convention on Human Rights, adopted in 1950, obliges all signatory parties to secure the right to education. Since World War II, developed countries and many developing countries have increased age group participation in higher education. At the nominee level, up to 15 percent, up to a maximum of 16 to 50 percent. In many developed countries, participation in higher education has continued to increase worldwide, or, as Throw later called, open access, where more than half of the right age group participates in higher education. Higher education is important for the economy of the country, as an industry, itself, and as a source of skilled and educated workers throughout the economy. Educated college workers order a reasonable salary and are less likely to be unemployed than less educated workers.

Gender Sensitivity And Higher Education

Gender sensitivity is not about pitting women against men. On the contrary, education that is gender sensitive benefits members of both sexes. It helps them determine which assumptions in matters of gender are valid and which are stereotyped generalizations. Gender awareness requires not only intellectual understanding and effort but also sensitivity and open-mindedness to change one's views and limited perspectives and values. It opens up the widest possible range of life options for both women and men and builds their capacities to be more wholesome and humane. The concern for gender equality in and through education, especially in classroom spaces, is critical because of the negative and far-reaching implications that gender disparities and inequities (reflected through biases, stereotypes and discriminatory practices) have for educational institutions. Education is a major force that will help trigger change but this will occur only when teachers and learners are assisted in adopting classroom initiatives that reflect new images based on a positive gender equity ideology. Gender equality as a strategy has great potential to create desired change because it has the capacity to address both the practical and strategic needs of boys and girls, of nations and the world at large

Gender sensitizing "is about changing behavior and instilling empathy into the views that we hold about our own and the other genders." It helps people in "examining their personal attitudes and beliefs and questioning the 'realities' they thought they know.

Apart from the literal or dictionary meaning of words, each word has certain connotations or associated meanings. These are constructed by society. The dominant groups in society assign positive meanings to what they do and negative meanings to what _others 'do. The construction of gender is largely done by dominant groups who assign roles and responsibilities and give opportunities to, and have expectations of, males and females —separately. For instance, it is society that suggests that girls should play with dolls and boys cannot and should not do so. In this process of socialization, education and educational institutions play a central role. For instance, stereotypes pertaining to responsibilities,

roles and opportunities, to which we are initially exposed in family settings, are endorsed at educational institutions. So schools are places where the socializing process is reinforced and given legitimacy and authenticity. The social knowledge relating to gender is constructed, validated and perpetuated by schools through textbooks, pedagogy skills, assessment and the academic milieu.

Education, which has a strong link with power, has traditionally been a rare commodity for women. In Pakistan, we have seen long periods of silencing women and excluding them from modern education. That is why women have had to struggle hard to compete with men and create space for themselves in public life. In some parts of the subcontinent, the exposure of girls to learning is still confined to religious education. Modern education, which is the key to economic independence, is denied to them. The control and hegemony enjoyed by men is largely linked to their role as breadwinners of the family. Economic independence is generally ensured by the acquisition of modern education. Educational institutions have been engaged in perpetuating the existing social structures of power through the construction and legitimization of a skewed view of women. Even female students are led to internalize gender biased views in schools. Thus education, that is supposed to emancipate human beings, is performing the opposite function by creating a tunnel vision among students. This tunnel vision is designed to favor the powerful and discredit marginalized groups. If we are serious about reducing the gender gap in society we need to revisit some popular stereotypes about women. For this, social institutions in general and schools in particular have to play there. We need to have a thorough review of textbooks, pedagogy skills, an assessment system and the school milieu, and address areas where improvement is needed.

Gender sensitization makes people more sensitive towards the problem of women and so they tend to think about different reforms required to raise the status of women by empowering them. It initiates Policy makers to address gender related issues as a priority as gender bias hinders in attaining an equitable social and economic order. According to the Country Report of the Government of India, "Empowerment means moving from a weak position to execute a power." Education of women is the most powerful tool of change of position in society. Education also brings a reduction in inequalities and functions as a means of improving their status within the family. To encourage the education of women at all levels and for dilution of gender bias in providing knowledge and education, established schools, colleges and universities play important role.

Need For Gender Equality

Sensitization is by far the most effective and non-confrontationist approach of reforming the society. Gender sensitization is the process of changing the stereotype mind set of men and women- a mindset that strongly believes that men and women are unequal entities and hence has to function in different socio- economic space. Gender sensitization increases the sensitivity of people at large towards women and their problems. In the process it creates a class of responsive functionaries at different level, from policy making to grass root level, who are convinced that any form of gender bias is an obstacle on the way of attaining an equitable social and economic order and therefore consider addressing gender related issues in their situation as a matter of priority. Gender sensitization is first instance, tends to change the perception that men and women have of each other. It creates a mindset in men that no longer sees in women the stereotypical image. The impression that women are a weak and unequal entity no more clouds the minds of common man. Rather they are seen as responsible and equal partners in socio-economic development. The general perception of men and women on the rigid gender division of labor and other orthodox practices related to gender begin to die down. Women also tend to develop the perception that they are no subordinate to men and they have an equally important role to play in decision making at household, community and organization level.

The gender sensitization process enable the teacher to become instrument of change as far as status of women is concerned. To what extent have they become action oriented and alert to see that women are neither being neglected nor discriminated against and they get their due status in society? Conscious efforts are made to create a favorable climate that allows nurturing and flourishing of women's talent and provides more flexibility and freedom to women. Their perspective will help us to gather the information about their construction of social world related to gender issues and we will be able to see the impact of internalized notions of gender in the process of socialization from their childhood to present age. This will also help us to understand the common points of consensus in relation to gender concepts. The very aim of gender sensitization programmed is to bring definite orientation in the thinking, practices and approach of individuals concerning gender. The gender sensitization process that individuals, particularly the men undergo involves four stages namely change in perception, recognition, accommodation and action. These changes take place in response to certain interventions i.e. gender sensitization programme. The focus of study will be to judge effectiveness of gender sensitization programme and to what extent we are able to sensitize teachers with reference to existing gender issues at present. Gender sensitization process requires time to develop an understanding of the related issues and problems associated with it.

Major Steps Taken For Gender Sensitization In Education.

Ministry of Human Resource and Development Government of India promoting gender sensitization through following steps –

- School curriculum to be re-examined and revised with the view of promoting gender sensitization.
- Gender positive materials and module be an integral part of teachers' annual in-service programmers.
- It is advised that School assessment programme incorporate Gender sensitive parameters that promote gender sensitivity in classroom transaction and school extra co-curricular activities.
- It has also proposed that from upper primary classes, Physical Education classes should include training in self defense for girls.

Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE)

- It is preparing the gender sensitive modules to train teachers and thereby help students battle stereotypes against women from a young age, gender sensitive module for teachers will be in the form of advocacy programme for sensitization and creating awareness.
- The latest syllabus on Health and Physical Education for class I to X developed by National Council For Training and Education based on NCF National Curriculum Frame work included topics related to self defense which is included for upper primary classes under the theme Human Body, Security and safety, self defense and protection.
- The efforts have also been made to introduce value education and Gender studies in School syllabus.

University Grant Commission.

A taskforce was constituted by UGC to in January 2015 to review the measures for ensuring safety of women on campus and programmes for gender sensitivity. This task force is mandated to review the present arrangements on campuses for the safety and security of girls and women

Concluding Remarks

Thus we can conclude that gender sensitization through education can be an effective and primary tool to bring change in the thought process of students. The main focus should be on breaking the stereotypes and mind set related to gender prevalent in the society. The time has come for the stakeholders of education to take important step in the area of gender sensitization and thereby empowering women in cultivating a strong, rational and progressive society.

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