



GENDER SENSATIZATION THRUH IMPARTING EDUCATION AS A CHANGING AGENT

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Abstract

Deeply concerned with rising trends of social intolerance, and more particularly crimes against women, the National Commission for Women felt the need to set up an Expert Committee on Gender & Education. There is a growing realization that there is an imperative need to change the stereotyped mindset, especially of men and the community at large, which can only be done by purposeful and effective gender sensitization. Questions have been raised of the basic postulates of the educational structure and its various systems in India, with the conclusion that the existing models have failed and there is total lack of relevance between the human being and the complex contemporary society. Today's modern technology driven India requires the creation of a new culture - values of democracy, respect for human rights and equality. To this end, it is important to mainstream gender sensitization/ human rights and inequality.

Key Words : Women ,Gender ,Social Intolerance, Inequality, Democracy, Education .

I. Introduction

Gender sensitization refers to the modification of behavior by raising awareness of gender equality concerns. This can be achieved by conducting various sensitization campaigns, workshop, programs etc. Sensitization in the domain of Humanities and Social Sciences, is seen 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 equality issues. It is interlinked with empowerment.

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

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.

II) Role of education as a changing agent

i) Recognizing the role of education as a catalyst in gender sensitization

In recent times, there has been widespread debate on how education is the most effective means in impacting and re-orienting gender stereotypes and traditional gender roles; and on its role in changing traditional mindset in society Education certainly has the potential to play a key role in gender formation and change. Gender is a socially constructed and intersectional identity: it always intersects with social class, ethnicity and religion, culture, disability, sexuality, age etc. Education itself offers real opportunities to challenge gender stereotypes. Education has the potential to contribute to alternative socialization, challenging conventional gender ideologies, leveling the playing field between males and females in relation to skills, credentials and qualification, and allowing women the use of knowledge to empower themselves in diverse ways. For example, a study in Calcutta has shown the positive impact that education has on the ability of women to resist and resolve situations of domestic violence (Sen., 1999).

ii) Courses in gender studies can make a huge difference

Academicians believe that courses in gender studies and women's studies can play a big role in sensitizing students to this issue along with workshops and discussions and other such activities. Many universities across the country already have



Women's studies centers and gender sensitization committees that offer courses and help students to be more proactive and sensitive towards this issue. The University Grants Commission (UGC) had also issued guidelines in the eleventh plan for development of women's studies in Indian universities and colleges.

Delhi University, for instance, has the Women's Studies and Development Centre (WSDC) to address women's issues in higher education. It offers short-term courses for undergraduates, graduates and postgraduates. Certificate courses in women's studies are offered at colleges for undergraduates. Courses titled gender and society for graduates and advanced certificate course in gender studies for postgraduates are run by WSDC.

iii) Role of national policy on education

The National Policy on Education (NPE, 1986) as revised in 1992 which is a landmark in the field of policy on women's education in that it recognized the need to redress traditional gender imbalances in educational access and achievement. The NPE also recognized that enhancing infrastructure alone will not redress the problem. Education will be used as an agent of basic change in the status of women. In order to neutralize the accumulated distortions of the past, there will be a well-conceived edge in favor of women. This will be an act of faith and social Engineering. The removal of women's literacy and obstacles inhibiting their access to, and retention in elementary education will receive overriding priority, through provision of special support services setting time targets and effective monitoring.

iv) Role of Sarva Siksha Abhiyan (SSA)

Introduced in 2001 reaches out to every district in the country. Its main motive is to bridge and eliminate gender differences in enrollment, retention and quality of learning. It promotes gender equality through free text books for girls, separate toilets for girls, recruitment of 50% women teachers. However, the CAG report placed in Parliament on 20 August 2006, on the scheme found the programme has only partially achieved its targets during the first four years, from 2001-02 to 2004-05. Even though underfunding was a cause for it, high dropout rates, skewed pupil teacher ratio, inadequate teacher training and failure to adequately address focus groups such as girls and children with special needs were causes of concern.

The objective of SSA was to enroll all out of school children in school, education guarantee centre's, alternate schools and back to school camps by 2003. The date was revised to 2005 only in March 2005. However, out of 3.40 crore children (as on 1 April 2001), 1.36 crore (40 per cent) children in the age group of 6-14 years remained out of school as on March 2005 four years after the implementation of the scheme and after having incurred an expenditure of Rs. 11133.57 crore.

- Despite utilisation of 86% of funds, 40% of children in age group 6-14 are out of schools.
- Diversion of funds as well as financial irregularities in many states.
- Supervision and monitoring of the scheme is ineffective at both national and state levels.

III) Role of Educators and Teachers as Change Agents

In view to make teacher trainees gender/caste sensitive they should be provided with appropriate information and training. Teachers training Institutes should take special training from experts working in gender/human rights related areas. Besides trainees should be motivated to prepare materials for gender/human rights sensitive instruction. This should form part of the curriculum.

i) Gender training

Gender/human rights training, should be imparted to teachers, concerned officials, staff, including education officials at the Block and District Education Offices, District Education and Training Institutes, supervisors and the members of SDMC.

ii) Syllabus on gender sensitization

Syllabus needs to address human trafficking since children 'at risk' of sexual abuse and trafficking. Students should be taught and explained, according to their capacity to comprehend; the difference between 'good' and 'bad' touch and be encouraged to report any misgiving. Since abuse is not only by adults, but also by older children. Education on awareness of relationships and hygiene safeguards to be included in syllabus in order to inculcate mature outlook towards body and bodily functions.

iii) Networking between educational institutions

In the process of bringing about gender equality in an educational environment, the department of education should network and work in close contact with those institutions working on gender sensitive issues. Gender related material prepared by voluntary organization and other stakeholders on gender related issues (posters, handbills, charts, and pictures visual media illustrating girl children's education, women's empowerment, education for adolescents, and other related topics) should be used.



Conclusion

We can conclude by saying that the requirement is for a lifelong learning on gender equality through the development of social partnership between organizations from civil society and political world in order to enhance understanding of women's issues as issues of power in society and gender training for teachers is the first step towards accomplishment of this goal. It is proposed that such leadership, empowerment, and gender trainings should be a part of teacher training programs in order to enable teachers not to gender discriminate and give equal opportunities to girls and boys thus promoting gender equity and equality.

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