

Gender Sensitization and Educational Institutions

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ABSTRACT

Men and women are like wheels of a bicycle. For any society to develop in all aspects it's important to take into consideration both men and women. For spreading awareness regarding gender issues gender sensitization is the new term being used by the social thinkers and activists. Gender Sensitization is spreading awareness and modifying the behavior of the individual towards gender, to bring revolutionary change in society by transforming the mind-set of the individuals by eradicating the stereotype thinking and practices and developing a concern of the society towards the gender issues. Education is always considered as a powerful tool for bringing any change in society. Teachers play an important role in modifying the attitudes of their students towards gender issues. Positive attitude needs to be created with the elimination of the negative thoughts towards objects, people, activities, events, or ideas. It is due to the personal belief and stereotype thinking that individual pertain in their mind from childhood. The teacher can shape the mind-set of the students by creating a positive ideology towards gender. The transformation or empowerment will only come when there is awareness of gender sensitivity in the minds of the youth. This paper is an attempt to find out the role that a teacher plays in creating an affective attitude and commitment towards gender sensitive environment in a student's life.

Keywords: *Gender, Gender Inequality, Gender Sensitization*

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1. Introduction

The concept of 'gender' has not merely been employed widely as an analytical category in academic discourse but also as a mechanism of women's liberation and empowerment movement during the last four and a half decades. It has been used to expose the design and practices of women's discrimination and exploitation as well as to assert their identity and rights. A heap of academic and impressionistic literature is produced to analyze and highlight multiple issues of women's marginalization. Gender inequalities are, generally, conceived as unequal distribution of benefits and burdens to men and women despite their equal contribution to the growth and development of collective social living. Everywhere women are found to be deprived of civic amenities, public participation and decision making power on the one hand; on the other hand they are shown overburdened with responsibilities of bearing and rearing children, providing services to family members and contributing directly or indirectly to the economy of household. In a nutshell, everywhere men are found privileged and women are under privileged. We are still trying from decades to understand the root cause of gender inequality in the society. Though causes of endemic and widespread gender inequalities are explained differently by different scholars depending upon the ideology they profess and perspective of investigation they employed. However, there is no disagreement among scholars that gender inequalities are social in nature and, therefore, are produced by multiple factors such as cultural values and practices, institutional matrix, existential condition and political disposition. Nevertheless, scholars and activists, mainly feminists, hold structure of patriarchy as a major factor of gender inequalities everywhere. (Dash, et al., 2008) are of the opinion that we need to reform the society in the most effective and non-confrontationist approach where sensitisation is a powerful vehicle to drive the force towards gender equality. With the rising trend of social intolerance and gender based violence various efforts are taken up to address the issues of gender discrimination. Many initiatives have been taken by the government and various laws are

also amended in our constitution but still the gap on the basis of gender is immensely increasing (Thomas, 2016). Gender Sensitization is considered as a weapon to bridge this gap.

Development of a nation can be measured by the condition of females. Where in India according to Narayanrao&Gingine(2016),many people face different challenges of discrimination in the name of gender, sex, caste, religion, class, creed, race and ethnicity etc. And Barodia (2015) aptly stated that even our society has a strong believe than men and women are 'unequal identities'. So, the treatment is biased on the basis of sex leading to differential position and importance in the society. This can be implemented with the help of the education system at grass root level i.e. schools and Colleges. Teachers can be the agents who can transform the young minds towards gender by metamorphosing the stereotype line of thought on genders. Barodia (2015)has explained in a study that special training programs that are held for teachers so that they can bring the desirable change through gender sensitization and pedagogic strategies to make the classroom gender sensitive are helpful in bringing the change upto some extend. Panigrahi, (2016) conducted a study entitled "Building Capacity to initiate change" to raise the awareness of teachers and train them to address prevailing gender and social issues in an academic setting. Another study by Allana et al. (2010) concluded that not even a single school has a gender interest committee to address the child sexual abuse. The teachers were not aware about the difference between sex and gender. The teachers were not equipped to conduct gender analysis of curriculum material, teaching and learning practices. To conclude, it was found that the educational system was not gender friendly, attitude of the teacher needs to be shaped and there is a lack of training regarding gender issues. Such committee is need of the hour and should be made at schools and colleges to address the problems of students Sebastian(2016) also conducted few studies to understand the perception of B.Ed. students related to gender role in the society and he felt that much work has to be done to change the perception of teachers towards gender issues. Lack of Gender Sensitization is the root cause of all the social problems in the society such as brutal rape, eve teasing, domestic violence etc. Education can play a vital role in the elimination of such social issues. Nayak(2014)recommends that compulsory courses and seminars on gender awareness should be conducted for teachers and students to change their attitude and perception towards the gender issues. Before getting into details we will discuss in brief what is the concept of gender sensitization?

Gender sensitization is considered as the process of modification in behaviour of individual by raising awareness of gender equality concerns. This can be achieved by conducting various sensitization campaigns, workshop, programs, etc. The term Sensitization in the domain of Social Sciences and Humanities 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. "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 Sensitization is not feeling empathy towards each other rather, it is to examine the personal attitudes and beliefs they though they know by questing the reality. In simple words, it acts as a revolutionary tool to modifying the behavior of the individual towards the genders. It's a high time to break the stereotypical thinking by cultivating a strong rational and progressive society.Narayanrao&Gingine (2016) defined Gender sensitivity as the act of being aware of constructed assumptions of gender and how they impact our practices. Whereas Aurange (2016) explained Gender sensitivity as the ability to recognize gender issues. It is the beginning of gender awareness, so that individuals rely less on assumptions about traditional and outdated views on the roles of men and women. Deshmukh (2016) referred Gender sensitization as the modification of behavior by raising awareness of gender equality concerns. Chaven (2016) is of the opinion that Gender sensitization 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. Gure (2016) referred Gender sensitization as a theory which claim that positive modification in the behaviour of all stakeholders, students and teachers towards children so that there have no causal effect on gender equality. In nutshell gender sensitisation is the process of through which people's behaviour/ attitude towards gender is shaped. Hence, gender sensitization can be understood as spreading awareness and modifying the behavior of the individual towards gender which will create gender equality in the society.

Sebastian (2016) has discussed some steps of gender sensitization, these steps are as follows:

1. Understanding- We can understand the Perception of an individual through the stimulus.
2. Identifying- The wrong perception can be identified
3. Confronting- Confronting with someone needs a lot of guts to arrive to the solution
4. Deciding- Deciding the best solution to the problems

Thosare (2016), the transformation or empowerment will only come when there is an awareness of gender sensitivity in the minds of the youth. It can only be brought when training is furnished which will definitely bring orientation in the thinking, practices and approach of the individuals. Prevention and interventions from grass root level, i.e. school is important to improve the behavior of the students to reinforce an affirmative social interaction towards gender. There is a need to groom the child from the childhood to

become a responsible youth, which will assist the society to flourish. Gender issues can be controlled if education system becomes the backyard to solve these issues by creating a gender based framework which will be a powerful tool towards the empowerment of both genders (Baviskar, 2016). Education system is a powerful tool to solve these issues by creating a gender based framework which will be a helpful in eradicating the gender inequality. A positive ideology towards gender should be manifested at grassroots level i.e. at school and college level. The stereotype thinking of the individual should be replaced with gender neutral terms and the teacher should work to spread awareness about gender in the class. Equal respect should be given to all the genders by spreading awareness and changing the stereotype thinking and learning the gender norms of the society for forming gender identities and creating a gender friendly milieu. Schools and colleges can act as yardstick where teachers can be the agents in building creative gender sensitive minds. To trigger the changes and to build the reflection of new image by creating sensitivity in the minds of youth this will further be based on a positive equity ideology towards gender. Teacher can change the mind-set of the individual by eradicating the orthodox practice and developing a concern of the society towards the gender issues.

In our society the problem of gender issues are prevailing in all areas of life (Patel & Shaikh, 2016). Schools are the gateway of knowledge where education is given beyond any boundation. Teachers act as an agent of social change, so we need to hook up such teachers in the school who have an affirmative knowledge towards gender to create a gender neutral environment. They act as a role model for the children and an inspiration to achieve their goals. They should always pertain a positive ideology towards life (Barodia, 2015). There are individual differences and the classroom is diverse with different kind of needs. The teacher should always be sensitive towards their needs by treating them equally in all aspects (Panigrahi, 2016).

Now-a-days teachers are charged with responsibilities to bring metamorphose in the young minds which can reframe the ideologies towards gender. They play a vital role in upbringing of the child with a positive mindset and beliefs which can reframe the shape of the society (Allana et al., 2010). As the potter can mould the clay and give shape to the earthen pots. In the same way teachers have the ability to shape the young minds and give them a direction that can be affirmative in nature (Sebastian, 2016). To train the students towards positive gender ideology they herself should have a positive attitude towards gender. Women's are facing a lot of challenges such as eve teasing, domestic violence, sexual harassment, dowry violence, inequality at workplace, etc. This need to be sensitized and a strong stride is required to solve these issues. In schools and colleges the classroom environment is built by the teacher. They can use various strategies and interventions to build a gender friendly milieu. They can also ensure that equal opportunities, responsibility and respect should be given to all the genders (Chaven, 2016). There are various gender issues that take place in the school setting which needs to be identified and taken in consideration. Some of the gender sensitive parameters in education are Gender discrimination in school layout, classroom practices, Instructional Material and child maltreatment. This can be controlled by the teacher if she wields gender sensitive approach in the classroom to extirpate all the issues in the system.

According to Narayanrao & Gingine (2016) "It is important to gain the insight into the overall situation of teachers as well as their behavior and attitude towards their pupil" following is the role of teacher in Gender Sensitization:-

- Gender Issue discussion in classroom
- Gender Sensitivity teaching
- Arrange Gender Sensitive Programmes
- Gender based Language
- Gender Equality in classroom
- Gender Equality based atmosphere in school
- Gender activity and projects
- Use strategies for gender sensitisation
- Women Empowerment
- Gender responsive classroom interaction

Teachers are an important source through which we can bring change in the society as they are the pillar of the education system. They are the knowledge transformers so the commitment of a teacher to the school and the students must be justified accordingly. "Attitude towards gender role is composite and conflicting" (Gul et al., 2012). People usually adhere verbally to the rhetoric of equality, the behaviour towards this is not necessary. Attitude can be positive or negative towards gender depending on the personal beliefs of a person. We have heard a teacher saying that 'Boys will be Boys' this is a gender bias statement. 'Boys are good in maths as compared to Girls' this statement manifestly shows that boys are favored more in mathematics as compared to girls (Deore, 2016). The teacher should have a positive attitude towards gender, and then only she can shape the society. Attitude and commitment are co-related to each other. If a person has a strong and an affirmative commitment towards something accordingly on that ground the

attitude of a person is built. The level of commitment also plays a foremost role in developing a positive attitude towards gender sensitivity.

Schools and colleges are the building block for the children where they learn things in formal and informal ways. A teacher has a commitment to the institution that they will create a milieu for all around development of the child. The development should have an affirmative outcome which can be through the right attitude of the teachers towards the classroom. Most of the research has shown that attitude and mind-set of the teachers needs to be changed for the overall development of the students. Teachers are not gender neutral when they enter the classroom (Barodia, 2015). Biasness is a hurdle that creates an unhealthy environment leading to gender discrimination. Biasness should be eradicated so that a trauma free environment can be furnished to the children in the schools and colleges. Attitude of teachers needs to be shaped towards gender equality to bring a change in the field of education. Several training programs or workshop should be held for the teachers to build a gender positive attitude and ideology so that a drastic change can be seen towards gender equality and education (Tatar & Emmanuel, 2001). Education is the only field which can bring a change in the behavior of the young minds. So, the first step towards gender equality should be taken through education by changing the attitude and perception of teachers and students towards gender discrimination.

2. Conclusion

We are living in a democratic country, as a citizen we cannot turn our blind eyes towards the duties and responsibilities (Dash, et al., 2008). Education is a weapon which has the power to shape the society. Schools are the pillar and teachers are the backbone of the institution. We need to metamorphose the stereotype thinking and patriarchal notions of the society. In the eyes of the law, every gender is treated equally. Many schemes are launched to empower genders, but still the issue of gender inequality is there for decades. From the above, we can conclude that Gender Sensitization through education can be an effective, forceful and a primary tool to empower the young minds by changing the thought process towards genders. Thus, attitude and commitment are the two important benchmarks through which we can have a positive ideology leading to gender unbiased society. It is the need of an hour to underline the importance and necessity of the genders to have a rational, strong and progressive social vacuum (Nayak, 2014). Teachers should always be ready and act as a helping aid for the students to create a gender neutral environment (Barodia, 2016). They should have a positive gender attitude and a strong level of commitment to the society. Gender sensitization through teachers can be a powerful vehicle which can bring a definite change in attitude and perception of the students towards gender.

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