

## Gender Sensitization in Education : A pathway to women Empowerment

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### Abstract

India has taken up the challenge to emerge as one of the most developed nations by 2020, by creating more literate, knowledgeable and economically progressive society. Women power is crucial to the economic growth of any country. In India efforts are 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 differences is possible only through gender sensitization. Gender and its accompanying power relations are built in all institutions of society be it family, educational institutions, work place, religious systems, beliefs, norms etc. This paper explains the need of gender sensitization in educational institution and strategies to be adopted in school to promote gender sensitization. It also describes different programmes developed to deal with various gender related issues.

Keywords : Gender , Gender sensitization

### Introduction

India has taken up the challenge to emerge as one of the most developed nations by 2020, by creating more literate, knowledgeable and economically progressive society. Women power is crucial to the economic growth of any country. In India efforts are 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 differences is possible only through gender sensitization. Gender and its accompanying power relations are built in all institutions of society be it family, educational institutions, work place, religious systems, beliefs, norms etc. It is the process which brings about changes in the thought process of people who believe man and women as different entities and so have different functions to perform in socio - economic area. 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.

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. Gender 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."

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 exercise 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.

### **Strategies to promote gender sensitization through School**

School is considered to be miniature society. It can become instrument of change as far as gender sensitization is considered. School can create favourable environment that allows every individual to nurture and flourish their talent with no gender discrimination. This in first instance tries to develop the perception that women are no subordinate to men and they have an equally important role to play in decision making at household, community and organization level.

Gender bias varies greatly according to the socio-cultural and economic contexts prevailing in the society. Therefore after having deep insight into the socio – economic contest and understanding the psychological situations of the people different strategies can be planned. Following strategies promote gender sensitization in school.

1. Making teaching learning process more participatory. Participation of students in class room activities irrespective of gender can be an instrument to achieve predetermined objectives. The participatory approach should be such that emotions and experience have a definite and valued place.
2. Providing space for individual children to express themselves freely in the classroom, without fear of judgement, and stereotyping are essential building blocks for their future endeavors where they can build confidence in taking wise decisions in their life.
3. To build up approaches that encourage learners to compare, comment and think about elements that exist in their own environment. It is necessary to critically question the received knowledge.
4. Encouraging educational activities in school for inculcating moral values among children and equal respect for boys and girls.
5. Various safety measures for girls in the school environment.
6. The teacher act as facilitator to create gender sensitized environment. The teacher's role is to provide a safe space for children to express themselves and simultaneously to build in certain forms of interaction. While consolidating and constructively pushing the limits of learner's understanding, she needs to be conscious of how differences are expressed. An atmosphere of trust would make the classroom a safe space where children can share experiences, where conflict can be acknowledged and constructively questioned, where resolutions, however tentative, can be mutually worked out. A space where they can practice democratic ways of interacting with each other and build skills to negotiate with conflicts outside the school. For girls in particular, school and classrooms should be spaces to discuss processes of decision making, to interrogate the basis of their decisions and to make informed choices.

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 programme.
- 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 defence for girls.

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.

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 defence which is included for upper primary classes under the theme Human Body, Security and safety , self defence and protection.
- The efforts have also been made to introduce value education and Gender studies in School syllabus.

**Conclusion** - 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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