

Gender Sensitization: An Analysis of the Role of Educational Institutions in India

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ABSTRACT

Gender sensitization is a movement through which the people with traditional outlook, should be able to assure equal participation of women and men in decision-making process; to facilitate equally; to equally access & control on all the resources; to acquire alike privileges of development; to get equal opportunities in employment and other fields as economic, political, cultural & social sector and also can get equivalent regard in all other aspects of their life and livelihood so that both genders can enjoy their human rights without any restraint and discomfort. With the help of education, gender sensitization in educational institutes can enhance awareness among the children, parents and other members of the society about their roles in future as the men and women in the society. This is the power of education that can bring a great social change in the society at large. Each educational institute should take some initiative to understand the gender-related issues and to sensitize its concerns among staffs, teachers, students and society for the women equality. There should be some relevant contents on gender equality in textbooks so that students can read and understand its essence. Also, the influence of teachers and educators as catalyst in this area cannot be underestimated at all. The broader goal of gender sensitization is a societal goal to which educational institutions must contribute to. A teacher should promote the respect towards the girls and women in the classroom environment and Government should also introduce some new programs and also ensure the proper implementation of policies that enhance the gender equality. This paper is based on Secondary data.

Keywords: Gender sensitization, Gender equality, Educational Institutions

Introduction

In the patriarchal society like India gender biasness begins from the birth itself, women are discriminated in areas like access to nutrition, basic childcare, education and work. The most painful devaluation of women is the physical and psychological violence that stalks them from cradle to grave. Patriarchy is created – it is created not by nature, but by a social system itself. Nature made us complementary and supplementary to each other, but human beings made us unequal. Patriarchy is a social system which considers male superior, gives them more rights and more access to resources and decision making. There is no term or ritual for equal partnership in the family. Women are expected to be subservient to men, leave decision making to men, not to speak out in the public or in taking major

decisions, not to be outspoken especially against men and generally to accept the injustices meted out to them by the system without a fight. Traditional role of women as home makers and men as breadwinners imposed by society have only reinforced the gender imbalance in the society. Various gender issues are prevailing in our society at all levels. To minimize these gender issues what we need is to change the mindset of our generation as they are people who can bring about further change in society , with their innovative ideas , thoughts and practices and this can eventually be done only through Gender sensitization.

Gender sensitization is the process of changing the stereotype mind set of men and women who strongly believes that men and women are unequal. Gender sensitization tends to change the perception of this said inequality and urge to bring the change in outlook of men and women that women are subordinate to men rather it enhance that both men and women are supplementary and complementary to each other. Women also tend to develop the perception that they are no more subordinate to any men and they have an equally important role to play in decision making at household, community and organization level. We can even say that, Gender Sensitization is the process in which the people of all genders are taught to respect everyone irrespective of gender while acknowledging the differences. Thus, Gender sensitization is a movement through which the people with stereotype & traditional outlook, should be able to assure equal participation of women and men in decision-making; to facilitate equally; to equally access & control on the resources; to acquire alike benefits of development; to get equal opportunities in employment ; economic, political, cultural & social sector and also can get equivalent regard in all other aspects of their life and livelihood so that both genders can enjoy their human rights without any restriction.

Meaning of Gender and Gender Sensitization

Gender is used to describe those characteristics of men and women which are socially determined rather biologically determined. According to WHO, **Gender** refers to the socially constructed characteristics of women and men – such as norms, roles and relationships of and between groups of women and men. It varies from society to society and can be changed. While most people are born either male or female, they are taught appropriate norms and behaviors – including how they should interact with others of the same or opposite sex within households, communities and work places. The word ‘gender’ was used by Ann Oakley and others in the 1970s to emphasise that everything women and men do, and everything expected from them, with the exception of their sexually distinct functions can change, and does change, over time and according to changing and varied social, economical, political, and cultural factors.

Gender sensitization refers to the modification of behavior by raising awareness of gender equality concerns. Gender sensitization theories claim that modification of the behavior of teachers and parents towards children can have a causal effect on gender equality. Gender sensitizing "is all about changing behavior and instilling empathy into the views of people that we hold about our own and the other genders. It helps people in "evaluating their personal attitudes and beliefs and questioning the 'realities' they thought they know."

Meaning of Gender Equality

Gender equality refers to equal opportunities and outcomes for both women and men. This involves the removal of all forms of discrimination and structural inequalities in access to resources, opportunities and employments, and the promotion of equal rights. Equality does not mean that women should be the same as men but promoting equality recognizes that men and women have different roles and needs in the society, both are important for the smooth functioning of the society, no one can replace the working of another.

Why Gender Considers as Women's Empowerment?

Although 'gender and development' includes both women and men, however, in most cases we focus only women this, is because of imbalance and unequal status of women in most of the societies where women do not have the same opportunities and personal freedom as men do and practice. Therefore, there is a need to focus women compared to men.

Need of Gender Sensitization in India

India is a country with the vast diversity existing in terms of its customs, traditions, rituals, social values, family beliefs and individual perception. Thus we need more systematic, well planned and more professional approach so as to encounter desired outcome. To inculcate this sensitivity and primarily highlight the contribution of both the genders in creation and development of a well balanced society is highly needed. The main problem of Indian society is lack of women recognition and appreciation for women's involvement in multifarious activities. The men, who are reluctant to acknowledge women's contribution, must come forward under the influence for sensitization to recognize their contribution. The gender sensitization process develops understanding that women do possess wisdom and therefore they must be involved in decision making process and their contribution toward the society as well as family must be acknowledge by all. They have concerns and therefore should be treated with dignity and equal chance in sharing of social, political and other economic benefits. The Constitution of India provides for equality of status and opportunity to all the citizens without any discrimination.

These provisions are related to gender equality:-

Article 14- Equality before law and equal protection of laws.

Article 15- Prohibition of discrimination on the grounds of race, sex etc.

Article 16- Equality of opportunity in the matters of public employment.

The following Directive principles in the constitution also specifically relate to gender equality-

Article 39(a):- That the citizens, men women equally have the right to an adequate means of livelihood.

Article 39(d):- That there is equal pay for equal work for both men and women.

Gender equality is necessary not only because of constitutional provision but also to set free the energy & capabilities of women and most importantly for the advancement of the society.

Role of Educational Institutions

Education is a major force that will help prompt change but this will occur only when teachers, educators and learners assist in adopting classroom initiatives that effect new images based on a positive gender equity ideology. Gender equality as a tool has great potential to create desired change in the perception because it has the capacity to address both the practical and strategic needs of boys and girls, nations and the world at large. Teachers are strategically positioned to act as catalyst to change the outlook of all learners in order to achieve gender equality especially through their teaching.

With the aid of education, gender sensitization in educational institutes can create awareness among the children, parents and other members of the community about their roles and responsibilities in future as the men and women in the society. Moreover, this is the power of education that can make a great social change in the society at large.

Gender sensitization through education aims to make students, parents and teachers aware about this field. It helps people in “examining their personal attitudes and belief towards specific gender .For the purpose of achieving equity, it is being stressed that there should be gender sensitization of people. As gender sensitization is a process of behavioral change by inculcating empathy into the views that people hold about their own and other sex.

School is considered to be miniature society. It can become instrument of social change as far as gender sensitization is considered because school can create favorable environment that allows every individual to nurture and flourish their talent with no gender discrimination. This in first instance which 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. Teacher can encourage educational activities in school for inculcating moral values among children which will promote equal respect for boys and girls. Presently, gender and women studies have become the specialized subject of study at the higher level of education too.

The specific process of socialization which teaches children their specific gender role is called gendering or gender role socialization. We can say that educational institutions are the places where the socializing process is resistant. The social knowledge relating to gender is constructed by schools through textbooks, pedagogy skills, assessment and the academic environment. Gender issues are prevailing in society in all areas of life .To minimize these gender issues we need to start changing the mindset of the younger generations of society as they are those who can bring about further change in society with their innovative ideas, thoughts and practices .To do this we need good educated teachers, who have a sound knowledge and experience regarding gender issues. Educational institutions play a very important role in this regard. Gender sensitization through education can be an effective and primary tool to bring social change in the thought process of students because students are the roots of society which flourish and expand their ideology in the society. The main focus should be on breaking the stereotypes mind set related to gender prevalent in our society, once it is break we can enhance the change through our positive outlook. Thus, in the educational institutions teachers can best serve as role models for the students. Teachers need not only taught gender sensitive curricula and textbooks but also impart gender equality education among the students.

Conclusion and Suggestions

Gender Sensitization is one of the basic requirements for the normal development of an individual and society as well. Without being sensitive and aware about the needs of a particular gender, an individual may refrain from understanding the opposite gender to the fullest and in some acute cases even him or herself. The need for this sensitivity has been felt and realised through times immemorial and in almost all kinds of human existence, across the globe. These are some suggestions to the educational institutions regarding gender sensitization-

- ✓ The workshops, seminars, debates and gender sensitization cell should be established so that more students become active participants
- ✓ As the students studying in colleges are more aware and educated, they as pioneer of this campaign would become the foundation of society.
- ✓ Curriculum related to gender sensitization needs to be added compulsory at schools well as college level.
- ✓ Awareness drive should be started by educational institutions in society especially in rural and other backward areas.
- ✓ Government should introduce more welfare schemes for females to make them self-independent.
- ✓ Each educational institutes and school should take positive initiative to understand the gender-related issues and to sensitize its' concerns staffs, teachers, students and society for the women equality.
- ✓ There should be some relevant contents on gender equality in textbooks.
- ✓ A teacher should promote the respect to the girls and women in the classroom environment and outside from the schools.
- ✓ Government should also introduce new programs & schemes and also make ensure the proper implementation of policies and strategies that ensure the gender equality.

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