



GENDER DISCRIMINATION AND ACADEMICS – A REVIEW

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Abstract

Gender inequality in India refers to socially constructed differences between men and women in India that systematically empower one group to the detriment of the other. Women continue to face gender discrimination in this civil rights era" but it does not operate through the kinds of overt barriers to participation that mobilized activists in the 1960s; it is embedded in the fabric of everyday interaction. Gender inequalities include unequal rights, responsibilities, and opportunities for Indian women and translate to poor health status, educational attainment, and economic status compared to men. To minimize these gender issues we need to start changing the mindsets of the younger generation of society as they are those who can bring about further change in society, with their innovative ideas, thoughts and practices. This paper analyses various issues to gender indiscrimination.

Key words: Capacity Building, civil rights, gender inequalities, literacy, Social Change, Teacher

Introduction:

An attempt is made in this paper to present the gender discrimination and academics. Gender inequalities include unequal rights, responsibilities, and opportunities for Indian women and translate to poor health status, educational attainment, and economic status compared to men. Even in schools, it takes place. The influence of teachers and educators on gender roles of their students immensely impacts their educational outcomes as well as their roles in contemporary society.

Gender inequality and global perspective

Despite gains in economic development, India performs poorly on global measures of gender inequality and

in 2012, fell behind all other Asian countries except Afghanistan on the UNDP Gender Inequality Index, ranking 132nd out of 148 countries. As such, it has been deemed 'One of the worst countries for women' by the Times of India.

According to the Global Gender Gap Report (GGGR) released by the World Economic Forum (WEF) in 2011, India was ranked 113 on the Gender Gap Index (GGI) among 135 countries polled. Since then, India has improved its rankings on the World Economic Forum's Gender Gap Index (GGI) to 105/136 in 2013. Women in India are at a particular disadvantage due to gender based violence and limited access to resources. Gender inequality in India is a multifaceted issue that concerns men and women alike. Some



argue that some gender equality measures, place men at a disadvantage. However, when India's population is examined as a whole, women are at a disadvantage in several important ways.

All institutions of society exhibit this gender disparity as gender is rarely thought to be important and hardly understood and addressed. Such behaviours and attitudes especially in educational institutions and academic settings are a further set back to gender equity and equality concerns thereby promoting gender based discrimination in the overall processes and performance of educational institutions. Women throughout the world face a range of challenges, levels of education, health care, political representation and discrimination and sexual violence are all too frequent. One of the most prominent cases of a country is struggling with the competing dynamics of development, modernization, religion and tradition.

"Teachers and educators influence the gender roles of their students thus impacting their educational outcomes. When considering Education for All (EFA) goal 5, which aimed to eliminate gender disparities in primary and secondary education by 2005 and now aims to achieve gender equality by 2015, it should be realized that teachers are a critical force for meeting the goal" as in. Educationists, academicians and faculty greatly influence gender socialization and mould gender roles of students, thus having impact on quality of life and power distribution. Since we are concerned how teachers act as change

agents on prevailing gender issues in contemporary society, it is essential that the concept of gender and its sensitization be further clarified for our understanding. "Gender is determined socially; it is the societal meaning assigned to male and female. Each society emphasizes particular roles that each sex should play, although there is wide latitude in acceptable behaviours for each gender" as in.

Moreover in "Reference World Health Organization stresses, Gender is used to describe those characteristics of women and men, which are socially constructed, while sex refers to those which are biologically determined. People are born female or male but learn to be girls and boys who grow into women and men. This learned behaviour makes up gender identity and determines gender roles". Furthermore "Reference suggests, Gender is the division of people into two categories, "men" and "women." Through interaction with caretakers, socialization in childhood, peer pressure in adolescence, and gendered work and family roles women and men are socially constructed to be different in behavior, attitudes, and emotions.

Theoretical Review:

The gender discrimination in schools is an extension of what we think in the family, in society and in the community in which we live. Unless there is camaraderie, dignity and partnership among the members of and within the family, it is difficult to expect the school to create it artificially in the school environment, and to pursue it without



reference to what is happening in society. There has to be a democratic environment in the home for the child to be democratic in his/her lifestyle. Any programme of gender discrimination elimination in educational institutions must take into confidence, the parents and guardians and undoubtedly the teachers (both men and women), for whom there must be continuous programmes orienting them to equality in thought and deed. Persons in the community and the media have to be involved, for the programme touches the lives of children outside of schools. It cannot succeed if pursued in the school alone. The total number of girl students enrolled in the upper primary education are much better because of many policy interventions on behalf of the girl child, such as the Report of the National Committee on Women's Education (1958-9), the Kothari Commission Report (1964-5) and above all the National Policy (1968) and the National Policy on Education (1986), which stressed the need for empowering women, that is making them capable of guiding their own destiny and becoming self-reliant through exposure to education and survival skills, including income generation.

The Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization of the United Nations (UNESCO) stated that *'education should be a means to empower children and adults alike to become active participants in the transformation of their societies. Learning should also focus on the values, attitudes and behaviours which enable individuals to learn to live together in a*

world characterized by diversity and pluralism' (UNESCO, internet 2006). In this regard the function of schools as educational institutions and the responsibility of teachers became key factors in the development of students and pupils, empowering and enabling them to develop their skills, interests and individuals potential. Houston (1996) puts particular stress on the status of teachers and states that 'schools can never be more effective than their quality of their teachers' (Houston, 1996: ix). However the quality of a teacher is founded not on intuition and experience (Leavitt, 1992) but above all on high quality education.

In many States there is mid-day meal scheme, which is intended to attract children of the poorer sections to enrol in schools. And only women are recruited as primary school teachers. Most States has attempted attracting girls to enrol in schools, by making education free for all girls right up to the professional stage. This however has the catch that even those girls coming from families who can afford to pay, get free education. We here recall the instance of a Centre run in the Jama Masjid area by the Central Social Welfare Board many years ago, for girl dropouts who, through a 'condensed course', could appear for the school final exam leading to a matriculation degree. For such centres, there were two criteria — the students had to be girls from poor families. The girls who attended this centre, could afford to pay, so they would not normally be entitled to come to the centre. But they pleaded that the centre should not be closed down. The reason



that they gave is something very important, they said that their culture and community would not allow them to attend regular schools, once they had attained puberty. They wanted to study and if they were given a chance to finish school studies here, it would be a boon not only to them but also to their girl children, who might have the chance to go to school and be educated! The centre was allowed to continue on their request.

Within the school itself, there is need to identify the overt and covert discrimination, arising out of ignorance and deeply ingrained ways of thinking, on the part of teachers and educational administrators. This manifests itself in language, gesture, posture and action as seen in the way girls and boys are seated in the classroom. We neither need to exceed the limits of decency nor need we show prudery — again it is for teachers and the administrators in schools to ensure that girls and boys are comfortable in each other's company. Quite often more chances are given to boys than to girls (by a kind of reflex action) to answer questions or to take on responsibility. Girls keep away from sports and physical activity and nothing is done to see that they are talked out of this preference by providing some transport or other facilities for getting home safe and encouraging them to take part in all the games and fitness programmes of the school. In fact, it should be advocated that self-defence should be compulsorily taught from an early stage for all children, particularly girls, in order to build confidence in them.

For many girls from poor families, the biggest problem is that of self-image, which is hardly thought of as a problem by their parents, who may also not have a good self-image (and anyway, the view may be — how can girls feel so for they are born only to bear children and look after them). Even in developed countries, there are problems amongst teenagers entering the adolescent stage, as is but natural all the world over, for at this stage of growing up, when suddenly they have to restrict themselves, girls consider being girls as 'unlucky'. For a girl, the passage into adolescence is not just marked by menarche or a few new curves. It is marked by a loss of confidence in herself and her abilities, especially in math and science. It is marked by a scathingly critical attitude toward her body, and a blossoming sense of inadequacy.' If it is like this in an advanced country with plenty of opportunities for girls and boys, we can imagine the situation in our country, where female infanticide is still practised in certain parts.

Most studies show that, on average, girls do better in school than boys. Girls get higher grades and complete high school at a higher rate compared to boys (Jacobs, 2002). Standardized achievement tests also show that females are better at spelling and perform better on tests of literacy, writing, and general knowledge (National Center for Education Statistics, 2003). An international aptitude test administered to fourth graders in 35 countries, for example, showed that females outscored males on reading literacy in every



country. Although there were no differences between boys and girls in fourth grade on mathematics, boys began to perform better than girls on science tests in fourth grade (International Association for the Evaluation of Education Achievement, n.d.). Girls continue to exhibit higher verbal ability throughout high school, but they begin to lose ground to boys after fourth grade on tests of both mathematical and science ability. These gender differences in math and science achievement have implications for girls' future careers and have been a source of concern for educators everywhere.

At a recent conference in Trivandrum in December 2000, a new agenda for women's education was talked about. It was felt that there are not many women at top levels of educational policy and administration, even though 'teaching' is considered a 'female' profession and this is a great drawback as women's perceptions and perspectives are needed for formulating the agenda based on the experience of women's education in India. You cannot think of education in isolation of what is to be done for raising the level of women's progress. The theme of the Beijing conference was "Look at things through women's eyes". Let us add the word "also" at the end of it.

India is on target to meet its Millennium Development Goal of gender parity in education by 2015 UNICEF's measure of attendance rate and Gender Equality in Education Index (GEEI) capture the quality of education. Despite some gains, India needs to triple

its rate of improvement to reach GEEI score of 95% by 2015 under the Millennium Development Goals. In rural India girls continue to be less educated than the boys. According to a 1998 report by U.S. Department of Commerce, the chief barrier to female education in India are inadequate school facilities (such as sanitary facilities), shortage of female teachers and gender bias in curriculum (majority of the female characters being depicted as weak and helpless vs. strong, adventurous, and intelligent men with high prestige jobs

Recommendations:

Gender issues are prevailing in society in all areas of life. To minimize these gender issues we need to start changing the mindsets of the younger generation 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 regarding gender issues.

Teachers play a very important part in the early upbringing of the child and their ideas and beliefs can change the thought patterns of young students. A teacher must therefore constantly be aware of the fact that his or her actions/attitude/behavior/perspective/approach/manner/outlook/mind-set will help to shape a child's gender role. Studies have shown gender differences to have a direct relationship to preferential treatment, classroom dynamics and academic success. Thus, Teachers are required to be serious about the gender



issue. For the teachers to bring about a change in the society they should be given pre hand knowledge over the issue. Teachers need not only gender sensitive curricula and textbooks but also gender equality education. Teachers can serve as role models for the students.

The shift in paradigm we have outlined requires us to rethink our strategies for bringing about institutional change if we are to ensure the effective participation of highly trained women and minority scholars in the academy. It is necessary but insufficient to challenge intentional forms of discrimination. Gender and racial schemas are internalized by everyone and often operate despite good intentions on the part of individuals. It follows that familiar dynamics of blame that turn on accusations of discriminatory intent are counterproductive. As Valian argues, everyone is liable to make errors in judgment as a consequence of the gender schemas they have internalized; what they should be held accountable for is the failure to scrutinize their judgments critically and take steps, personally and institutionally, to counteract these errors. It also follows that institutional change will require many different types of intervention. The arguments that will raise awareness about these subtle forms of discriminatory practice and the strategies that will be effective in changing them will vary widely depending on context and institutional actors.

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