

## **Gender Sensitization: An Appraisal of the Roles of Teachers and Educational Institutions**

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**Abstract:** *Gender refers to social classification of men and women into 'masculine' and 'feminine'. Gender is a social construct of sex that owes its creation to a number of social institutions. Some of these include family, educational institutions, workplace, religious system, beliefs and norms. Gender inequality has always been one of the major issue in our country. The simple meaning of gender sensitization is the modification of behavior by raising awareness of gender equality and its concerns. It does not mean pitting one gender against the other. Gender Sensitization is one basic requirement for the normal development of an individual. Without being sensitive to the needs of a particular gender, an individual may not be able to understand the opposite gender. The need of gender sensitization has always been felt in the past and in the present scenario it has become more important. In a diverse country like India which has witnessed acute gender discrimination in the past gender sensitization is a need. It is very important to sensitize the younger generation so that they are more aware and sensitive towards the issue. In performing the above said function i.e. promoting gender sensitization among the youth, teachers and higher educational institution like colleges and universities can play a major role. Educational institutions and the teachers' active in these institutions can prove to be decisive factors in promoting gender sensitization. The present paper is an attempt to explore the need of gender sensitization and the role teachers and educational institution can play to remove gender inequality. The paper will also ponder over the importance of gender sensitization and self realization among the common folk.*

**Keywords:** *Gender sensitization, gender equality, teachers, educational institutions.*

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### **I. INTRODUCTION**

Gender refers to social classification of men and women into masculine and feminine. Gender is a social construct that owes its creation to a number of social institutions. Some of these include family, educational institutions, workplace, religious system, norms and beliefs. Unlike sex, which is biological the gender identities of women and men are psychological and social which means historically and culturally determined. The specific process of socialization which teaches children their gender roles is called 'gendering'. The construction of gender is largely one by dominant groups who assign role and responsibilities and give opportunities to and have expectations of males and females separately. For instance, it is society that stereotype the toys as well as dresses according to the gender like girls should play with dolls especially Barbie and boys should play with cars and guns. Although the T V serials which is commonly meant for children has same notion like Chota Bheem. In this cartoon boy character like Raju and Bheem are portrayed as strong where as princess Indumati and Chutki are contrary. Chutki being a girl is very bold and participated equally like boys where as Indumati portrayed as fragile and soft. The impact is so much deeply embedded in the psyche of children that every one wants to be children like Indumati and not like Chutki.

Gender unlike sex is more amorphous in nature and is subject to change with reference to context and time. That is why the concept of gender varies from context to context. Gender is political view of sex that is based on binary division of male and female. This binary division apparently looks natural but the problem with this division starts when one is considered inferior to other and this problem gives rise to many other problems in the society.

Gender sensitization is all about changing behavior and instilling empathy into the views that one hold about one's own sex and other sex. It acquaints men and women with each other's existence and helps to generate respect for the individual regardless of sex. In a patriarchal society like India gender bias begins from the birth, women are discriminated in areas like access to nutrition, childcare, education and work. Patriarchy is a social system which considers male as superiors and gives them more rights and more access to resources and decision making. Traditional roles of women as homemakers and men as bread winners imposed by society have only reinforced the gender imbalance. Many academicians and intellectuals argue that in the modern Indian society there is no devaluation of women and they are considered as equals in each and every field. No doubt there has been a lot of changes regarding the status and rights of women in the Indian society but this doesn't change the mindset of people living in a patriarchal society nor does it increase the value of women in a male dominant society. In a society where women have been discriminated against men for centuries changes cannot be brought about by giving special rights to women but we need to change the mental makeup and

thinking about women. People need to be made more and more aware and sensitized about gender inequality the problems it creates in the society. Gender sensitivity is the act of being aware of the ways people think about gender, so that individuals rely less on assumptions about traditional and outdated views on the roles of men and women.

### **Need of Gender Sensitization**

Gender sensitization aims to make students, parents and teachers aware about this field. It helps people in “examining their personal attitudes and beliefs and questioning the ‘realities’ they thought they know” 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 instilling empathy into the views that people hold about their own and other sex. The constitution of India provides for equality of status and opportunity to all the citizens in the country. The following Provisions in the constitution relates 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 unleash the energy and capabilities of women. Besides the realization that development of women is necessary for the overall development of nation. The following factors have also been propelling countries towards attaining gender equality:-

1. Increasing awareness among people, particularly in advanced countries, that gender roles are social constructs and that women are capable of doing any type of job.
2. Increasing awareness among women about their rights and their subjugation and exploitation for centuries in male dominant and patriarchal society.
3. Improvement in educational level of women which made them aware of their relative status vis-à-vis men.

### **Need of Gender Sensitization in India**

Particularly in a country like India with the vast diversity existing in terms of its customs ,traditions,rituals,social values family beliefs and individual perception ,the need for a more systematic, well planned and more professional approach is desired to inculcate this sensitivity and primarily highlight the contribution of both the genders in creation and development of a well balanced society

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, 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 .They have concerns and therefore should be treated with dignity and equal chance in sharing of social and economic benefits.

### **Gender Sensitization and Teacher**

Gender sensitization is not about putting women’s against men. On the contrary, education that is gender sensitive benefits members of both sexes. It helps them determine which assumptions in matter of gender are valid and which are stereotyped generalizations. 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 inequalities(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 assists in adopting classroom initiatives that effect 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, nations and the world at large In this regard, teachers are strategically positioned to act as agents of change in order to achieve gender equality especially through what they teach, how they teach and how they role model their own attitudes, beliefs and practices in the classroom and beyond.

### **Role of Educational Institutions**

The specific process of socialization which teaches children their gender role is called gendering or gender role socialization .In this process ,education and educational institutions play a central role .For instance, stereotypes pertaining to responsibilities ,roles and opportunities to which we are initially exposed in family settings are endorsed at educational institutions .So, educational institutions are the places where the socializing

process is reinforced and given legitimacy and authenticity. The social knowledge relating to gender is constructed, validated and perpetuated by schools through textbooks, pedagogy skills, assessment and the academic milieu.

### **Role of Teacher in Gender Sensitization**

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 regarding gender issues. Teachers play a very important role 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/mindset will help to shape a Child's gender role. Teacher may use multiple strategies and interventions to ensure that students have equal opportunities to both create and obtain their goals.

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 prehand knowledge over the issue. Teachers need not only gender sensitive curricula and textbooks but also gender equality education. Teachers can serve as a role models for the students.

### **Need of Gender Sensitized Society**

Gender sensitization is the process of changing the stereotype mind set of men and women - a mind set that strongly believes that men and women are unequal 'entities' and hence have to function in different socio economic space. Gender sensitization tends to change the perception that men and women have of each other. It creates a mind set in men that no longer sees in women the stereotypical image .The impression that women are a weak and unequal entity no more clouds the minds of common man. Rather they are seen as responsible and equal partners in socio economic development. Women also tend to develop the perception that they are no subordinate to men and they have an equally important role to play in decision making at household, community and organization level.

## **II. MY CONTRIBUTION**

1. The workshops, seminars, debates and gender sensitization cell should be established so that more students become active participants
2. As the students studying in colleges are more aware and educated, they as pioneer of this campaign would become the foundation of society.
3. Curriculum related to gender sensitization needs to be added.
4. Courses related to gender equity needs to be added.
5. Awareness drive should be started by educational institutions in society especially in rural areas.

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