

TEACHERS' ROLE IN TRANSACTION OF GENDER ISSUES IN CLASS

Teachers are the key actors in the delivery of a curriculum through interaction and personal example. Studies show that teacher's attitude and acceptance go a long way in raising the self-esteem of pupils. Analysis of curriculum and educational programmes show the existence of gender bias and gender stereotyping to a large extent. The school curriculum and its transaction, especially in the early years leaves indelible marks on young minds and shapes their perception of their future adult roles.

Teachers may answer the following to test his/her own understanding.

Do I plan different activities for boys and girls?

Within the same activity, do I plan different roles for boys and girls?

Are examples used by me in teaching and discussions mostly male?

Do I write sentences using more boys' names than girls'?

Do I have different behaviour expectations from girls?

Do I display affection and displeasure in different ways towards boys and girls?

Do I discipline or punish boys and girls differently?

Do I reward boys and girls for different things, in different ways?

Do I dispense my questions to boys and girls evenly?

Do I assign duties/tasks equally among girls and boys?

Do I encourage both girls and boys to ask questions?

Do I tend to give sex role behaviour cues to girls and boys such as?

Boys should/not Big boys do not

Good girls do not

Teachers should ponder over responses and discuss openly with colleagues. There could be a need to modify teachers' behaviour patterns which were conditioned by early experiences of gender role segregation and discrimination which got fixed in their lives at different levels.

The following is a list of what action can be taken to remove the barriers and disabilities faced by the girl child through conscious intervention ensuring

- the right to survival
- protection from all forms of abuse, both physical and mental
- help female student in her all round development as a free citizen of a free nation and

- above all, to survive with dignity as a person, as a human.

This is perhaps the biggest challenge of our lives, so that we do our best to see girls come to school, learn and grow up as confident persons with a positive self-concept and contribute to the development of our nation, our world. They are equally entitled to the gains of development.

The status of a girl child is directly affected by the situation of women in a particular group, in a particular society, in a particular region. It is equally important to look into the self-concept of boys in traditional setups and identify areas of their behaviour that need to be modified in the framework of equality and mutual dignity. As masculine and feminine roles and behaviour are social constructions, these need to be redefined in the light of equal participation of all women and men in all walks of life. We are confident that as teachers, you will yourself find creative and practical solutions to the problem according to the context in which you live and work. Teacher's role in inculcating this equality in young minds through curriculum, with suitable examples is crucial and challenging.

Teacher as a Manager

For improving access, enrolment, retention and achievement of girls, a teacher is often the head teacher and as such an educational administrator. As an administrator, she can function effectively by contacting Block District authorities for providing more school places by creating better physical facilities, especially toilets for girls and medical facilities for children. Moreover, timely distribution of incentives to girls and boys such as free books, uniforms and attendance scholarships is bound to encourage learning.

Making sure that there are Anganwahis, crkches near the school or alternatively get NFE centers openedshifted near the Anganwadis and contacting parents and spreading awareness on usefulness of girls' education has also led to positive results in enrolments and retention.

Organizing girl child campaigns and special drives for girls' education in collaboration with Mahila Mandals, Village Panchayats and Non governmental organizations, if any may be encouraged. Encourage girls towards enrolment and retention and help them improve their achievement beyond primary and middle stages by talking to their parents and arranging for open school/correspondence education with the help of the Education Department.

Higher authorities should be encouraged to open higher secondary schools or distance educationopen schooling in the same school. Researches show that composite schools are a positive factor in continuance of girls' in schooling. If required transport arrangements for girls to commute to other nearby villages /towns by bus andor by bicycle should be made teachers should identifying potential drop out girls. Those girls who are irregular, late comers, with poor academic performance or have a negative self image tend to drop out.

These girls should be identified and suitable intervention should be made accordingly,like offering remedial classes for low achiever girls. Teachers may also:-

- Help high achiever girls to continue their studies, thus opening their door for modern occupations.
- A permanent committee of school principles, teachers, creative artists should be set up to suggest and prepare school programmes related to awareness generation, for example skits, dramas, debates, poster making etc.
- Formation of and interaction with the Parent teacher association (PTA) by school authorities is a necessity for inculcating positive values and attitudes in both the parents and the children.

Teacher and Classroom Management

The following are the few dos' and don'ts in this regard:

- Do not segregate boys and girls in the class room in primary classes.
- Have two monitors in each classroom, a boy and a girl.
- Make mixed groups for group activities and games.
- Encourage both boys and girls to read aloud, recite and speak on topics related to their immediate lives.
- Make special effort to direct questions at girls and other shy children.
- Try 'role switch' for breaking down gender barriers and stereotyping of gender roles (which children internalize before reaching the school). Try to relieve girls of activities that are related to domestic chores, orderliness and cleanliness and make both boys and girls share all activities.
- Avoid being overprotective or partial toward girls openly as this generates resentment in the boys and reinforces dependent behaviour of girls.
- Avoid derogatory remarks like - Abe tu ladki hai jo rota hai (Are you a girl that you are crying?) or running down a girl who is playful and active - (Tomboy).
- Prepare girls for leadership and decision making along with boys, both sets of children accepting one another as equals.