

**Semester IV**

**Paper VI**

**Unit II**

**Topic :- Gender inequality in school context**

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## **Gender Inequality in school context**

In educational institutions, gender inequality still prevails. Girls have been discriminated against in terms of various aspects as compared to their male counterparts. The primary aspect in terms of gender inequality has been experienced is in participation. The students are required to participate in number of areas in educational institutions. Girls were provided with less participation opportunities as compared to their male counterparts and hence, it led to prevalence of gender inequality. In rural communities, this problem has been more severe as compared to urban communities. Gender inequality in education is regarded as the major impediment within the course of overall progression of the system of education. Therefore, it is essential to formulate measures and programs that are focused upon making provision of equal rights and opportunities to girls, not only within the course of acquisition of education, but also in the implementation of other job duties. The parents at home and teachers in school need to provide equal participation opportunities to girls.

Gender Inequality in education is a persistent problem within the Indian society, especially for the girls, belonging to economically weaker sections of the society. Gender inequalities are important in various dimensions, these include, education, health, employment or pay. During the past several decades, there have been progressions made in the achievement of universal enrolment of students in schools. Furthermore, there have been enactment of policies and procedures to address gender inequality in education. However, in the present scenario too, there have been education gaps. The major factors that contribute to education gaps are, socio-economic factors, accessibility to learning materials and resources, time devoted towards formal learning activities and the cultural viewpoints and perspectives among individuals and communities regarding the education of girls.

In usually rural communities, there has been prevalence of the viewpoint among individuals that girls are meant to carry out the household chores and school education is not meant for them. They have to eventually get married and in their marital homes, they would not have any opportunities to make use of their educational skills, but carry out the household responsibilities. But these perspectives are changing and girls too are encouraged towards acquisition of education.

## **Factors Causing Gender Inequality in Education**

There are existence of multiple and diverse connections between gender equality and fulfilment of the basic right to education. The women and girls are experiencing denial of human right to education not only in India, but in other countries of the world as well. The factors causing gender inequality in education have been stated as follows:

### **Poverty**

When individuals are residing in the conditions of poverty, then they experience number of problems and challenges in making ends meet. In some cases, they even experience problems in meeting their daily nutritional requirements. The individuals and families, who are residing in the conditions of poverty have the primary objective of generating sufficient income to sustain their living conditions satisfactorily. They usually do not possess financial resources to meet the expenses, involved in the pursuance of education. Even when education is provided free of cost, they still need to meet other expenses, involved in education. These are, stationary items, books, bags, uniforms, transportation costs and so forth. The poverty stricken individuals experience problems in meeting these expenses.

They possess this viewpoint that education should be provided to the sons, so they are able to get engaged in good employment opportunities in future. Whereas, girls are trained in terms of performance of household responsibilities and minor jobs to earn some income to support their families. The girls are usually discouraged from acquisition of education, due to limited financial resources. Their male siblings teach them, what they have learned in schools, primarily to enhance their basic literacy skills of reading, writing and numeracy.

### **Prevalence of Traditional Viewpoints**

The individuals and communities usually possessed traditional viewpoints regarding the education of girls. Particularly, when they possessed limited financial resources, then they believed that these resources should be saved for marriage of their girls and should not be spent on education. Another viewpoint was that in marital homes, girls would not be able to utilize their educational skills and would primarily have to implement the household responsibilities. Taking this aspect into consideration, from the initial stage, they train their girls regarding the implementation of household responsibilities. In the past period, girls and women were merely confined within their homes and not allowed to participate in any social functions or events. They were not allowed to express their viewpoints and perspectives in

the decision making matters. They primarily sustained their living conditions on the income earned by men and were meant to obey the decisions and rules formulated by them. Hence, due to the prevalence of traditional viewpoints, they were discriminated against and were deprived of certain rights and opportunities.

### **School Infrastructure**

The school infrastructure is regarded as significant in the formation of suitable and amiable learning environment and in the pursuance of academic goals. With the availability of adequate infrastructural facilities, the members of the educational institutions are able to carry out their job duties in a well-organized manner. Furthermore, the students are also able to feel pleasurable within the school environment and get motivated towards their studies. Research has indicated that due to lack of appropriate infrastructural facilities, the students usually drop out, before their educational skills are honed. This applies particularly to the girls. The important infrastructural facilities in schools that are essential to enhance the system of education are, furniture, equipment, materials, technologies, restrooms, civic amenities, transportation facilities, playgrounds, classrooms, library facilities, laboratories and overall school environmental conditions.

### **Discriminatory Treatment among Girls**

It has been found that among the deprived, marginalized and socio-economically backward sections of the society, the girls and women usually experience discriminatory treatment. The discriminatory treatment among girls is depicted in number of aspects. These are, acquisition of education, attainment of employment opportunities, empowerment opportunities, deprivation in right to property, deprivation from having a say in the decision making matters, deprivation from expressing their viewpoints and perspectives, discouraged from participation in social, economic, cultural and political activities, remaining confined within the households, implementing household chores and taking care of the needs and requirements of their family members. Furthermore, they also experience discriminatory treatment regarding health and medical facilities and even food items. Good quality food was provided to the male members and females were given simple food. The prevalence of discriminatory treatment against women regarding these aspects is not only a barrier within the course of their progression, but also in development of the communities and nation.

## **Occurrence of Criminal and Violent Acts**

In rural as well as in urban communities, women and girls have experienced criminal and violent acts to a major extent. These acts are, verbal abuse, physical abuse, sexual harassment, discriminatory treatment, rape, acid attacks, female foeticide and female infanticide, child trafficking, domestic violence and neglect. The experiencing of these acts on the part of girls and women, have an effect upon their physical as well as psychological health. The extent of suffering usually depends upon the extent to which they have experienced these acts. Sometimes teachers, staff members and fellow students have been involved in such acts. Therefore, for not only leading to progression of women, but also in the enhancement of the system of education, it is necessary to formulate measures that would curb criminal and violent acts in schools, particularly against women and girls, promote equal rights and opportunities among them and treat them with respect and courtesy

## **Child Marriage**

Child marriage is when marriage of the individuals takes place, when they are below 18 years of age. Child marriage imposes negative effects upon the individuals, particularly girls. When girls are married at a young age, then they are normally deprived of acquisition of education, getting engaged in employment opportunities, and participation in other childhood activities. They merely are required to remain within the homes, implement household responsibilities and take care of the needs and requirements of other family members.

## **Education of the Parents**

Education of the parents is a crucial factor for promoting education among children, inculcating the traits of morality and ethics among them and leading to their well-being. When the parents are well-educated and are engaged in reputed employment opportunities, then it is apparent that they will make provision of good quality education to their children. Educated parents will also be aware of the fact that it is necessary to ensure that equal rights and opportunities should be provided to both boys and girls. Hence, they get their children enrolled in reputed educational institutions and make provision of opportunities to them to enhance their career prospects.

On the other hand, when the parents are not much educated nor possess the basic literacy skills of reading, writing and numeracy, then in such cases they do not recognize the

significance of education and promote equal rights and opportunities for both girls and boys towards acquisition of education.

### **Lack of Interest in Studies**

In the present existence, individuals, belonging to all categories and backgrounds have recognized the significance of education. The individuals have recognized that through acquisition of education, there will be creation of a base, which would assist them in the adequate sustenance of the living conditions. Generating awareness in terms of these aspects would render an effective contribution in enabling the parents to get their children enrolled in schools. Academic learning is not easy. The individuals need to pay adequate attention, particularly when the teacher is teaching, depict regularity in their studies and possess the educational resources that are essential for the achievement of academic goals. When the students do not possess adequate resources, when they do not acquire an efficient understanding of the academic concepts, then they are not able to develop an interest in studies. Hence, lack of interest in studies is one of the crucial factors that causes gender inequality in education.

### **Programs Promoting Women's Education**

India is one of the founding members of the United Nations, and although at that time, still under the rule of the British, has been a member of the United Nations since 1945. At the summit in 2000, eight goals, such as, alleviation of poverty, halting the spread of AIDS, providing Universal Primary Education and so forth, known as the Millennium Development Goals were agreed upon with the deadline of 2015. In 2015, the United Nations built upon these goals and formed 17 Sustainable Development Goals within the time frame of 15 years. Among these 17 goals, two goals are primarily related to promoting education among women. These are quality education, which is goal four and gender equality, which is goal five. The quality education goal aims to ensure free and equal quality education to both boys and girls in primary and secondary schools, equal access to affordable quality higher education and to eliminate gender differences at all levels of education. The gender equality goal aims to provide equal access to social and professional systems within the society, such as, politics, decent work, health care and education. It also endorses policies and regulations that are necessary to promote gender equality, empowerment opportunities among women and end to discriminatory practices against women.

The Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education (RTE) Act says that all children, between the ages of six to 14 years should have the right to free and compulsory education. Another program that was initiated was Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) in 2000-2001. The primary objective of this program was to eliminate gender gaps in education, achieve educational objectives throughout the country, access and retention and bring about improvements in the quality of education. The major aspects that were taken into account were, initiation of new schools and accessibility to educational resources. SSA works towards the implementation of number of goals and objectives. In the achievement of these goals and objectives, equality and gender concerns are regarded as crucial factors.

A scheme known as Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan (RMSA) was initiated in 2009. The major objective of this scheme was to make secondary education available to all individuals, within the age group of 15 to 16 years. The objectives of the scheme are to bring about improvements in the quality of education by having prescribed norms and standards. It aims to ensure the complete availability of secondary education by 2017. By 2020, it aims to achieve the retention rates of the students to a major extent and to eliminate disability, socio-economic and gender impediments by providing support and assistance to the individuals, belonging to marginalized and socio-economically backward sections of the society and who experience disabilities.

In 2004, a program was initiated, known as Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya (KGBV). The major objective of this program was to establish upper primary schools with housing accommodation for the girls, belonging to deprived and marginalized sections of the society. The program was implemented in many parts of the country, where the literacy gender gap is above average and the literacy rate among girls is below average. The majority of the places in schools are reserved for girls, belonging to disadvantaged and minority communities and the rest are reserved for the girls, belonging to families, below the poverty line. In the KGBV schools, girls are encouraged towards acquisition of education by making provision of various items free of cost. These include, free textbooks, free uniforms, stationary items, bags, medical and health care facilities, housing accommodation, counselling and guidance facilities, financial assistance, mid-day meals and so forth.