

GENDER EQUALITY IN EDUCATION



Ultimate goal of the education is to shape and develop desirable society of future. Education is also expected to contribute to the sound development of our youth so that they can become responsible members of future world. For making the future world better, schools are considered foremost institution to educate children for serving their communities with positive spirit. Thus, as teachers it is our responsibility to ensure that all children have an equal access to a rights-based, quality education. An opportunity to receive quality education will have a long lasting positive impact on the lives of girls and boys as they grow into adulthood. To ensure gender equality in education it is essential for teachers to have a clear understanding of the gender related concepts and how these concepts can be understood in the context of education. This brief paper explains the difference between sex and gender. It also explains the concepts of equality in education.

Societal view of gender

Sex refers to the biological and physiological differences between men and women.

Gender refers to the key characteristics, roles and responsibilities which are approved by a society or culture for men and women.

Biological and physiological differences are defined by nature and hence cannot be changed. For instance, women give birth to babies which are a role women throughout the world perform. Similarly, men around the world have same biological functions. However, societies around the world associate certain qualities or attributes with men and women. An example of this is considering men assertive, strong and aggressive while women are considered weaker sex (*Sinf-e-nazuk*) who need men's protection. Similarly, men are seen as providers for family needs while the responsibility of care giving of the families is delegated to women. Certain attributes and roles and responsibilities approved by the societies for women and men refer to gender differences which are an outcome of social deliberations.

When do these gender differences become a concern? These gender differences become a matter of concern when women and men, on the basis of gender, are deprived of education, employment and other opportunities which enable quality life. The disparities in retention and achievement in education of our country can explain how gender based differentiated opportunities can lead to the inequalities in society. Schools as key contributors to students' gender identity, are the best places to instill among students the positive gender views; which lead to harmony in the society and promote equality of opportunities for both genders. Gender

equality means that males and females have equal opportunities to avail their full human rights and contribute to and benefit from economic, social, cultural, and political development.

The following Gender Equality Framework can be used to address different dimensions of equality in education. These are:

- **Equality of access** means that girls and boys are offered equitable opportunities to basic education.
- **Equality in the learning process** means that girls and boys receive equitable treatment and attention and have equal opportunities to learn.
Equality in the learning process also means that all learners should be exposed to teaching methods and materials such as curriculum, books, text, illustrations etc. that are free of stereotypes and gender bias.
In addition, that boys and girls should have the freedom to learn, explore, and develop skills in all academic and extracurricular offerings.
- **Equality of external results** occurs when the status of men and women, their access to goods and resources, and their ability to contribute to, participate in, and benefit from economic, social, cultural, and political activities are equal.
- **Equality of educational outcomes** means that girls and boys enjoy equal opportunities to achieve and outcomes are based on their individual talents and efforts. To ensure fair chances for achievement, the length of school careers, academic qualifications, and diplomas should not differ based on a person's sex.

Gender Equality in Education Framework indicates and addresses issues to ensure that boys and girls receive the maximum benefit from their education. To promote sense of equality and inclusion in schools it also helps and increase teachers and head teachers knowledge and skills to integrate gender perspective in their teaching and learning practices.

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