

Study Of Gender Stereotypes in NCERT & SIERT Primary Text Books

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Abstract:

Gender stereotypes and biases could be found anywhere in the range from an advertisement of a product to academic books. The culture of India is still ruled by the desire of having a male child in the family even in the 21st century; resultantly, male dominance is evident in all walks of life. The issue of marginalization of females in academics came into the limelight in the 1970s when the Ministry of Education and Social Welfare, Department published an eye-opening report 'Towards Equality' in 1974.

To identify the gender biases, discourse, and visual analysis of the school books is the best source and many feminists have done this kind of analysis to expose the gender-biased mentality of the people. The main reason for taking gender biases seriously is the development of the same poor mentality of considering females weak in the new generations who are in the formative years of their life. It is now a paramount need of exploring the school texts and removing the controversial images and details to develop a fair mentality among the children. In Blumberg (2007), the study of Firoz Bakhat Ahmed (2006) is quoted and reflected that though NCERT has given strict orders to remove such content from primary education unfortunately such material is persisting. If we get to know the pattern of the making of the books then it will be better to strike at the right place for improvement. The pattern of preparing the textbooks is as per the following details:

2 consultants, 4 authors, and 4 artists for the Ist standard

1 consultant, 6 authors, 1 layout artist, and 2 artists for the IInd Standard

1 chairperson, 1 reviewer, and 1 editor for the IIIrd standard

9 authors for the IVth and Vth Standard

The above-given details show that a significant number of people are working for developing the books for the students but still the need of revising these books is required.

Key Words: SIERT, NCERT, Gender, Curriculum, India, Government, Education

Introduction:

The roles of the characters given in the text work as the major source of identifying the characters; Males are shown as the pilots, vegetable vendors, shopkeepers, etc but these roles are not given to the females as they are shown as gardening, housekeepers, and bangle sellers. Even for activities drawing, Hop-Scotch, and Blindfold are the games that are shown for the females. The dressing style like frocks and salwar kurta is for girls and boys are allowed to wear t-shirts and jeans. Without wearing such clothes, girls are not able to participate properly in outdoor games and other activities like climbing up a tree.

Textbooks for primary education are the most important sources of knowledge for all generations. Schools serve as a highly influencing institution for transmitting social knowledge thereby facilitating desirable social change. Only exposure to school is not enough to alter gender inequality and stereotypes; The textbooks are considered the effective and less expensive medium of inculcating good ideas in the mind of the coming generation. Making textbooks gender sensitive

assists students to understand unequal power relations as most of the societies in the world we do have their gender belief systems with multiple stereotypes. To make a curriculum without any type of gender biasness gained momentum in 70's and various steps were taken by the Government of India in the field of education:

- The National Policy on Education (NPE) (1986) emphasized the elimination of all kinds of discrimination based on Gender.
- The National Policy for the Empowerment of women 2001 stated to remove gender biases.

In India, **The National Policy for Women (2016)** worked especially for removing the gender biases from the text. The curriculum is the main part of school studies and whatever children see through illustrations in the text sets a strong impression on the minds of students. Children tend to believe whatever is shown in the books as they consider it an absolute truth. These images are embossed on their minds and very much reflected in their behavioral pattern. A textbook should be centered on learners (learner-centric education) and should develop the ability to think rationally. In our society after parents, a child starts learning from teachers at his or her school and this child tends to believe that things are normal in the way these are shown in the textbooks. Thus we are making gender stereotyping a stronger obstacle in society. The proposed idea in this research is that if education at an elementary level focuses on gender equality and eliminates stereotypes then children will start thinking and developing their thoughts in an open-minded way in society, however, we can develop a women-friendly society by removing the hostility against them. It is very relevant and important to study and understand how our textbooks are designed, and how gender is depicted in the textbooks. **Gender Schema Theory** that the new generation develops the gender biases to the stereotypes in society. It is seen that the National Policy on Education (1986) and Programme of Action (1991) suggested to give the responsibility to make the textbooks better for the coming generations. Moreover, more polytechnic institutes are also recommended at the higher education level. The government policies are trying to remove the 'home science syndrome'. It is very much felt that the gender biases is felt in the textbooks, the teaching-learning process and even in classroom management. A lot of emphases is put on the training of the teachers too. Dr. Annie Dimple Castelino et al.(2018) recommended that teachers must be given training to identify the gender biasness in the study material.

Gender Roles

There are lots of factors that decide the gender roles like personality traits, domestic behavior, occupation, and physical appearance and all these can be traced in the books of state and centerboards. This research will also define how girls and boys learn to behave and choose their careers as per the conditioning of their brains. So, it is told that it is important to know that **'how both boys and girls develop their gender identity and learn the role to be played in the society.'** (Dr. Annie Dimple Castelino et al. ii) It is just a type of wrong socialization which changes our perspective towards the word being a boy or being a girl, **'how we and others look at ourselves and others'** (Dr. Annie Dimple Castelino et al. iii) This work will propose with proof that we need to stop forcing girl students to sit with only girl students or boys with only boys. This type of segregation will create a big chasm between the genders, and later the same bent of mind will get reflected in their activities in life. It thwarts the progress of the children as their mentality got distorted and they start believing that working with a girl or a boy is a crime by the opposite gender person. We need to address the following questions taking the context of the textbook material from first to fifth class: Finding gender discrimination and its different forms, all the possible causes of it, talking about the widespread gender inequality in the culture, different distinct areas of it like political, educational, and economical.

Ultimately we need to clarify the following points to improve the study material:

- Understanding the meaning of curriculum
- History of Education
- Data on school dropouts
- Poor enrollment of girls in school
- Reasons for poor participation of girls

To make India more independent and to furnish the goal of sustaining, it is recommended that to develop such an education system that a person can learn at any time. It is the future goal of India to implement it, **'The global education development agenda reflected in Goal 4 (SDG4) of the 2030-- Agenda for Sustainable Development, adopted by India in 2015 -- seeks to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all by 2030.'** (NEP 3) This policy agenda is even targeting the higher aim which is to make the education system of India the most coveted one. The aim of making India the top in education by 2040 is clearly mentioned in NEP3. Moreover, higher level cognitive development is also targeted in the latest education policy as it is mentioned in the official document in the policy that with the cognitive skills, the foundational skills are also important in life to develop.

Targets of the NEP in India:

- Identifying the capabilities of an individual student and working on them to ensure their holistic development of them.
 - Achieving the fundamental and numeracy skills in the students in Grade 3.
 - It is also focused to allow the students to choose their learning trajectories as per their talent and interest.

Multidisciplinary and holistic education is promoted across the different levels of education. It is emphasizing the empathy, respect, cleanliness, courtesy, scientific temper, pluralism, and equality. Formative assessment instead of summative assessment is preferred. A National Curricular and Pedagogical Framework for Early Childhood Care and Education (NCFECCE) have decided on a new structure for the education system in India. In this framework, in para 1.2, it is written that the first five years will be formative years in primary education and this is useful for this research work. It will give a clear idea that what changes must be incorporated into the primary education system. This program introduces that the first three years must be based on activities with some light text imparting some moral message. An interactive learning process is also recommended at this level. The second phase of primary education consists of, 'The Middle Stage comprises three years of education, Preparatory Stage..... that students will be ready for at this stage across the sciences, mathematics, arts, social sciences, and humanities.' (NEP 11) Further, the secondary stage will work on subject-oriented education, 'with greater depth, greater critical thinking, greater attention to life aspirations, and greater flexibility and student choice of subjects.' (NEP 11) More than the cognitive development, character building is a supreme target for the new education policy. Moreover, the gaps in the language spoken by a child are explored. The NEP policy also recommends the use of three languages or learning; three languages including one extra-regional language at the national level for increasing the integrity of the nation. To check the progress on the NEP implementation we have the National Assessment Centre, PARAKH (Performance Assessment, Review, and Analysis of Knowledge for Holistic Development) (NEP 19)

The Required Change

Gender stereotypes in the written text and illustrations clearly have an adverse effect on females. To bring a big change in the texts, it is advised that the spirit of cooperation between the males and females must be ensured.

Literature Review

Any specified thought in a situation applied to all people in a general sense is called a stereotype. The Oxford Dictionary defines it as an oversimplified image of the idea of a person or thing. If we want to see some examples then we can say that women are not good at science or Asians are good at it. There are several curriculum definitions and the common ideas in all these definitions are that it contains a well-strategized content for ensuring the all-round development of the children during primary education, especially because till this time children develop their preparatory level for understanding the world around her or him. D. K. Wheeler (1978), Kerr (1968), Oluoch (1982), A. Glatthorn (1987), J. Wiles & J. Bondi (1989) all have given their definitions of the curriculum and they find as the backbone for the learning process for the children during the first five or six years of learning.

Textbooks are very sensitive material because these books reflect the culture and practices of a particular country or community. Any type of gender inequality is reflected in the textbooks very quickly and gets transferred to the next generation, so we need a precaution. At a broader level, we see that visibility of the women is very low in the textbook. It is seen that the visibility of female characters is low in the books and the underrepresentation of them is wrong. It is seen that, "men are identified with stereotypical attributes ...while caring, self-sacrificing, love, and kindness as female attributes." (Block 51)

Moreover, the idea of male supremacy works as the natural concept in the textbook and the children reading these books in the schools find it as the normal pattern of life because teachers are prone to take examples which are biased like talking about a man reading the newspaper and mother, cooking food in the kitchen.

This research work is going to promote ways to make the gender-equal curriculum. Since the independence of our country, we find that the Hansa Mehta committee (1961) examined the curriculum of schools in India and identified the problematic area. This committee says that women must be enabled to take education as well as fulfilling her duties of the household. They must be given chance to choose their profession as per their choice not as per the outdated ideas of society.

This committee gave the several recommendations like:

- No discrimination in the curriculum for boys and girls
- Introducing needle-craft, cooking, music and dance for all boys and girls in the school
- Home -Science is a core subject for boys and girls both

Even after its good suggestions, this committee could not break its cords with the stereotypes. Further, in 1962 Bhaktavalsalam Committee's work in the Madras was also appreciated in the same direction to remove the gender biases. The committee gave a plethora of suggestion to improve the system.

The Kothari Commission (1964-66) also agrees with the fact that removing gender biasness is the most important part of curriculum development. It says, "Special efforts should be made to encourage girls to study mathematics or science at the secondary stage." (Block 54) and at the later stage, the commission promotes all the subjects as per their choice. This commission wanted to make the fundamentals of Science and Maths stronger in an early age and later the child would go with the subjects of his or her choice.

The next committee for removing the gender biases from the curriculum was formed in 1971 by a resolution for the Ministry of Education and Social Welfare. This commission recommended a separate curriculum for girls and boys and failed to support the idea of supporting science and mathematics for the girl child. The Education Commission of 1966 was more logical as it suggested that gender inequality must be removed from the syllabi of the children in primary and secondary education. In fact United Nations declared 1975 as the International Women's year and in India also the authorities were ready to wage a war against inequality. Thus again a need was felt to restructure the education policy and National Policy on Education (1986) and it was also revised in 1991.

Preconceived ideas projected in films, audio, visuals, and books are controlling the psyche of the new generation so controlling these ideas is really very important.

Women and Men are often stereotyped in the reel or real life or from the workplace to textbooks; there are ample examples if we look closely around us. We are so immune to such things that all of us take it as a normal pattern of life. Our brains are conditioned highly that we often ignore the debates and voices in different forms for the gender equality.

Schools are great sources to socialize the new generation. There are many agents involved in the socialization process which transmit the traditional gender roles in children. Families act as the primary source in the process of socialization in society and schools play the second major role in socializing young children. "Socialization that occurs in schools can be instrumental in reinforcing which usually interact with girls and boys differently." (Anand 224)

The development of the child's personality is majorly dependent on the images and details given in the primary education textbooks. It is seen that the current textbooks are perpetuating gender biases from generation to generation. Even after the revision of textbooks, we find that still, the content is not able to give an impartial view of life to the children. The recommendation that females must edit these textbooks works well and "Studies show that textbooks were written by female authors has a higher representation and frequency of female icons." (Durrani 13) Gender equality is the main motto of this research and we will find out the loopholes which are not helpful to develop the right mentality in the coming generation. At the tender age of five, children develop a self-image. It is very important to impart the right kind of education so they will develop the right self-image. Education is not only about knowledge but it is about illuminating minds, creating creative minds, and developing rational thinkers. The curriculum is an integral part of the education system and the curriculum should be free from all kinds of biases. Textbooks play a vital role in a learner's life and visual images or illustrations that are often treated as decorations are much more impactful than the text. When children see images they often start relating themselves to those images in the books; following which they try to develop their role in society. That is the reason that this research is focused on text books and it delves deep into the text books to expose all the wrong representations of the genders.

Studies have found that as early as four, children begin to understand gender as a basic component of self. Through illustrations, books define standards for feminine and masculine behavior. (Sovic, Hus 496) Children begin to see themselves through text, and illustrations and start perceiving the same roles for them. Their career choices, ambitions, and thoughts are all shape in that way only and all gender differences begin to surface. It often leaves a negative impression on minds. Girls are often shown, as passive, gentle, and quiet, and boys are confident, strong, heroes. Simone de Beauvoir says that passivity is the behavioral pattern that is imposed on women by both society and education both. Moreover, she says that boys are enjoying subjective freedom but girls are bound to live an isolated life.

The National Curriculum Framework (2005) says that textbooks are the real source to inculcate the right mindset. National Policy for the empowerment of Women (2001) also states the importance of making textbooks free from any biases.

In one of the reports of UNESCO, the men-supporting content is taken as rife and in Rajasthan, especially the primary education books are deeply perpetuating gender discrimination. In class III, there is a chapter that shows the boys playing the games and no girls are shown doing such activities like this. Even in a general magazine of Rajasthan, it is seen that they are grinding chikkis and filling water and such activities keep them fit. Such types of interpretations show the effect of the ethos of the feudal system. A class 12 sociology textbook in Maharashtra listed, the 'ugliness of the girl and 'disability' as one of the reasons for families seeking the dowry at the time of the marriage. We need to break the regressive attitude towards women and the attitude to look at a female from the perspective of equality is important.

Conclusion

In this review research paper, a deep insight is given to improve the curriculum of the students in the schools. Generally, we are gaping at the pattern of the problem so this review paper has shown the right direction that how good can be brought in the curriculum of the children and new study material can be developed under the guiding authorities of India for its development. As all the relevant questions are also mentioned to address all the important aspects for the removal of gender biases from the mind of the children, it is expected by this research that this paper will help the curriculum developers to bring a visible change in the study material to build the coming generation free from the gender biases.

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