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Gender Sensitization in Teacher Training Programs

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Abstract

Gender sensitization has become an essential component of inclusive and equitable education in the 21st century, particularly within teacher education programmes. Despite policy commitments at both national and international levels, gender stereotypes and biases continue to persist in curriculum content, classroom practices, institutional cultures, and teacher attitudes. As future educators play a significant role in shaping learners' perceptions, behaviours, and social values, integrating gender sensitivity into teacher preparation is necessary for promoting equality and social justice in educational settings.

The present study critically examines the role and importance of gender sensitization in pre-service teacher education programmes in India, with special reference to Bachelor of Education (B.Ed.) and Diploma in Elementary Education (D.El.Ed.) courses. Using a narrative review approach, the study analyses policy documents such as the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, National Curriculum Framework for Teacher Education (NCFTE) 2009, and global frameworks including Sustainable Development Goals (SDG 4 and SDG 5) and UNESCO guidelines. It also reviews relevant theoretical perspectives such as Social Learning Theory, Feminist Pedagogy, Transformative Learning Theory, Critical Pedagogy, and Gender Schema Theory to understand the conceptual foundations of gender sensitization in teacher education.

The findings of the study indicate that although gender equality is recognised in policy frameworks, its implementation in teacher education programmes often remains limited and symbolic. Curriculum integration is frequently superficial, and opportunities for experiential learning, reflective practices, and institutional gender-sensitive initiatives remain inadequate. The study highlights the importance of strengthening curriculum content, teacher training modules, co-curricular activities, and institutional practices to promote gender-responsive teaching.

The study concludes that gender sensitization must be treated as a core component of teacher education rather than an optional topic. Strengthening gender-sensitive training will help develop inclusive classrooms, reduce stereotypes, and empower teachers to act as agents of social transformation. The findings provide practical recommendations for improving teacher education programmes in alignment with national educational priorities and global commitments to equity and inclusion.

Keywords: Gender Sensitization, Teacher Education, Gender Equality, Inclusive Education, NEP 2020, SDG 5



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A. INTRODUCTION

Brief background:

The problem of gender inequality is pervasive and still exists in many facets of society, including the educational system. In practice, schools and teacher education programs may unintentionally reinforce gender stereotypes and biases, despite the fact that education is frequently seen as a transformational force for attaining equity and justice. Curriculum content, classroom procedures, language use, teacher-student relationships, and institutional

policies are some examples of how they can appear.

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Teachers have the ability to Mold pupils' attitudes, self-perceptions, and worldviews since they are role models and influencers on young minds. Nonetheless, a lot of teachers incorporate old gender standards into their lesson plans, sometimes without realizing it. For instance, they could assign ladies chores involving cleaning or caring for others, while they might expect guys to do very well in science and math. In addition to perpetuating restrictive perceptions, these behaviours impede students' overall growth and the attainment of gender parity in school.

The act of learning about gender-related topics and fostering sensitivity toward gender equity—a vital component of teacher preparation programs. Regardless of gender identity or expression, it helps aspiring educators to identify and examine their own prejudices, embrace inclusive teaching methods, and establish secure, encouraging learning environments for all students.

Incorporating gender sensitization into pre-service and in-service teacher education is a step toward meeting national and international commitments to inclusive and equitable education, in addition to being a reaction to the need for societal change. By preparing aspiring educators to be gender justice advocates, it helps create a society that is more inclusive, democratic, and courteous.

Rationale of the Study:

Even though education has advanced significantly, gender-based discrimination and stereotyping are still pervasive in texts, classroom procedures, and teacher conduct. By separating expectations, classroom responsibilities, and assessment criteria for boys and girls, instructors frequently unintentionally perpetuate gender stereotypes. These covert biases might result in unfair learning chances and a classroom atmosphere that is neither inclusive nor empowering.

The goal of teacher education programs is to equip aspiring teachers to meet the many demands of the classroom. But a lot of these programs still don't give gender concerns enough attention. The skills, viewpoints, and critical thinking required to comprehend and confront gender-based disparities in education might not be provided to aspiring educators. They are therefore ill-prepared to handle gender diversity or advance equitable learning for all students when they first enter the field.

With national policies like India's National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 and international educational goals like the UN Sustainable Development Goals 4 (Quality Education) and 5 (Gender Equality), it is becoming more and more important to make sure that teacher preparation is in line with the principles of inclusivity and equity. Educating educators on gender as a social construct that affects power dynamics, student-teacher relationships, and learning outcomes is part of this.

This study is important because it aims to emphasize how crucial gender sensitization is in teacher preparation programs. In order to address gender-based prejudices in the classroom, critically analyse gender roles, and create an atmosphere where all students feel valued, protected, and supported, it promotes a transformational approach to teacher education.

Objectives of the Study

1. To explain gender sensitization's concept and significance.
2. To examine how teacher training programmes integrate gender sensitization.
3. To determine whether educational practices reflect gender-based perceptions and differences.
4. To understand how national educational policies promote gender equality.
5. To suggest practical recommendations to improve gender sensitivity among teacher trainees.

Research Questions

1. How is gender sensitization conceptualized within teacher education programmes?
2. To what extent are gender perspectives integrated into teacher training curricula?
3. What challenges exist in implementing gender-sensitive practices in educational institutions?
4. How can teacher education programmes be strengthened to promote gender equality effectively?

Research Methodology

This study adopts a **qualitative narrative review method**. It is based on the systematic analysis of secondary data sources including research articles, policy documents, teacher education frameworks, and international educational reports related to gender sensitization.

Key documents reviewed include:

- National Education Policy 2020
- National Curriculum Framework for Teacher Education 2009
- Sustainable Development Goal 4
- Sustainable Development Goal 5
- UNESCO Gender Equality Framework



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The study applies thematic interpretation to identify major trends, conceptual gaps, and pedagogical implications related to gender sensitization in teacher education programmes.

Scope of the Study:

Understanding and evaluating the incorporation of gender sensitization in teacher training programs is the main emphasis of this study, which mainly focuses on pre-service education in India, specifically on Bachelor of Education (B.Ed.) and Diploma in Elementary Education (D.El.Ed.) programs. Given how instructors have a significant impact on students' social attitudes and mindsets, this study intends to investigate how teacher education may actively question and change conventional gender stereotypes.

This study covers the following areas:

- **Curriculum Review:** Examining teacher preparation programs to see if gender-related material is incorporated in a useful and effective way.
- **Training Approaches:** Analyzing the instructional strategies and pedagogical resources employed in teacher preparation programs to advance gender sensitivity.
- **Institutional Practices:** Investigating how organizations' cultures, rules, and classroom dynamics either support or ignore gender parity.
- **Policy Frameworks:** Investigating how gender-sensitive teacher education is shaped by national initiatives like NEP 2020, NCFTE 2009, and UGC norms.
- **Global Perspectives:** Making analogies with global norms and UNESCO guidelines to put gender sensitization in perspective.

The research focuses particularly on gender roles, gender equality, and inclusion as they are treated within the area of teacher education, rather than attempting to cover every facet of gender discourse (such as sexuality education or intersectionality in depth).

The research guarantees a thorough examination of a particular but significant issue within the larger subject of gender and education by focusing only on teacher preparation. The knowledge acquired can help develop more gender-responsive teachers and institutions by informing changes to training materials, instructional strategies, and policy formulation.

Significance of the Study:

1. By teaching aspiring educators, the value of treating all pupils equally, regardless of gender, this study advances gender equality.
2. It promotes the development of inclusive classrooms where each student experiences support, safety, and respect.
3. The study calls attention to potential covert gender biases in instructional strategies and motivates educators to think critically and make necessary improvements.
4. By offering ideas on how to include gender sensitization into the curriculum, it helps to enhance teacher preparation programs.
5. The study is in line with global objectives like SDG 5 (Gender Equality) and promotes the execution of national education plans like NEP 2020.
6. Through their effect on pupils, gender-sensitive educators can eventually contribute to the creation of a more inclusive and equitable society.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK / THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

1. Explanation of Key Terms and Concepts:

a) Gender:

The term "gender" describes the social and cultural roles, attitudes, and characteristics that a society views as suitable for people according to their perceived sex. It goes beyond biological distinctions to encompass identity, duties, and relationships.

b) Gender Sensitization:

The practice of bringing attention to gender disparities and promoting attitudes, actions, and laws that promote gender equality is known as gender sensitization. It refers to teaching educators to identify and confront gender stereotypes in the classroom during teacher preparation.

c) Gender Equality:

In a state of gender equality, people of both genders have equal rights, obligations, and opportunities in all areas of life, such as work, education, and decision-making.

d) Gender Parity:



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Fair treatment of both genders is a component of gender equity. Although they may be treated differently or equally, they are seen as having the same rights, advantages, responsibilities, and opportunities.

e) All-Inclusive Education:

With inclusive education, all students are accepted and given equal chances to thrive in the general education system, irrespective of their gender, aptitude, background, or identity.

f) Programs for Training Teachers:

Teacher training programs are organized educational initiatives created to get people ready for teaching. They include training for pre-service and in-service teachers that emphasizes gender sensitivity, ethics, pedagogy, and subject expertise.

2. Related Theories or Models:

a) Albert Bandura's Social Learning Theory:

According to this hypothesis, people pick up attitudes and actions by watching and copying others. Teachers serve as role models for gender sensitization. Gender stereotypes are less likely to be reinforced in schools when teachers act in a gender-equitable manner because pupils are likely to follow suit.

b) Theory of Feminist Education:

In the classroom, feminist pedagogy places a strong emphasis on inclusivity, equality, and teamwork. It promotes critical analysis of gender norms and other power structures. This approach aids aspiring teachers in examining their own prejudices and incorporating inclusive teaching methods into their lessons.

c) Jack Mezirow's Transformative Learning Theory:

This paradigm of adult learning places a strong emphasis on critical reflection as a means of personal growth. It pushes teachers to reevaluate their gender-based presumptions and embrace more egalitarian attitudes and actions toward all students when it comes to teacher preparation.

d) Paulo Freire's Critical Pedagogy:

Teachers and students are encouraged by Freire's philosophy to challenge restrictive societal conventions, particularly gender-related ones. Critical pedagogy-based teacher preparation equips teachers to confront injustices and create gender-sensitive learning environments.

e) Sandra Bem's Gender Schema Theory:

According to this hypothesis, people internalize gender-specific behaviors because they are expected to by society. Teachers have the power to either strengthen or weaken these schemas in the classroom. Training programs need to make sure educators understand these cognitive mechanisms and don't unintentionally encourage bias.

3. Academic context of the topic:

The significance of gender sensitization in teacher preparation is highlighted by the increasing focus on inclusive and equitable education by national and international policy authorities. Gender inclusion and the elimination of gender stereotypes in curriculum and instruction are specifically called for in India's National Education Policy (NEP) 2020.

Gender perspectives are also emphasized as being crucial to teacher preparation in the National Curriculum Framework for Teacher Education (NCFTE) and the National Council for Teacher Education (NCTE) standards.

Gender-sensitive teaching is promoted globally as a way to eradicate gender inequities in education by frameworks such as Sustainable Development Goal 5 (SDG 5) and UNESCO's Gender Equality Strategy.

While gender-aware instructors help to create just, equitable, and empowering learning environments for all students, gender-insensitive classrooms can reinforce prejudice, according to academic studies.

Review of Related Literature/ Narrative Review/Review Article

Joshi, A. (2008). A Study Comparing Male and Female Student Teachers' Emotional Intelligence. University of Kumaun. Female trainees showed more emotional sensitivity, according to Joshi's study on emotional intelligence in student-teachers. Although pertinent, curriculum-level interventions in teacher preparation and gender sensitization were not specifically included in the study.

Bora, A. (2018). Gender Representation in CBSE English Textbooks and Its Effect on Students. Hyderabad University. This study examined gender bias in textbooks and how it affects students' perceptions. Despite emphasizing the value of inclusive material, the study did not address teacher preparation or offer strategies for equipping educators to deal with gender sensitivity.

Kumari, M. (2017). Teaching proficiency and spiritual intelligence in teacher education. Haryana Central University. In his study, Kumari looked at teaching proficiency from the perspective of spiritual intelligence. It was concluded that



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female educators had superior interpersonal comprehension. It did not, however, specifically look at gender training programs or sensitization-related pedagogical strategies.

Kaur, G. (Year not mentioned). Creation of a gender equity e-learning module for development workers. In order to further gender equity, this study suggested e-learning programs. Despite being novel, the findings lacked contextual depth for formal schooling contexts since they focused on development workers rather than teacher education institutions.

Vishwambaran & Dibakar (2021). Gender transformation and intersectional pedagogy. Their study made clear that caste, class, and religion are all interconnected with gender. Although this viewpoint enhanced the conversation, it was mostly theoretical and did not assess how gender-sensitive pedagogies were applied in teacher preparation programs.

Siddiqui (n.d.). Examining the B.Ed. curriculum's gender components critically. Siddiqui assessed how gender issues were included into pre-service teacher preparation. He discovered a dearth of reflecting activities and tokenistic inclusion. Nevertheless, there was a lack of actual evidence about implementation and impact.

Devi, M., et al. (2021). School and teacher education practices that are sensitive to gender. The study focused on how pedagogy, teacher mentality, and school infrastructure may support gender equity. Although it did not evaluate the effectiveness of such programs, it recommended that teacher preparation colleges offer practical workshops.

Upadhyay, R., et al. (2023). Gender Sensitization Training and Violence Prevention in Schools. This research provided evidence that gender sensitization programs reduce gender-based bias and increase empathy among students. However, it focused on school students and not on training future teachers or curriculum design.

Khemchandani & Kakkar (2020). Although their evaluation, Reimagining Indian Education through Gender Sensitivity, called for curriculum and co-curricular program modifications, it was vague about teacher training frameworks, modules, or outcome-based methods.

Masood, N. (2021). Understanding Gender Awareness among Teachers and Parents. Masood argued for involving all educational stakeholders in promoting gender sensitivity. The study was qualitative and largely descriptive, offering limited insights into structured training modules for teacher educators.

Thematic Discussion / Critical Analysis

Theme 1: Gender Stereotypes in Educational Practices

Through textbooks, expectations for classroom conduct, and interactions between teachers and students, many teacher education programs unintentionally perpetuate conventional gender norms. Studies have revealed gender biases in curriculum material, for instance, when male characters have leadership positions and female characters are restricted to the home (Bora, 2018). Pre-service teachers may be gently persuaded to adopt and perpetuate these preconceptions as a result.

Critical Insight:

The implementation of inclusive education policies is frequently shallow. Bias may persist as a result of teacher educators themselves not receiving gender sensitization training.

Theme 2: Policy Gaps and Curriculum Limitations

Even while guidelines such as the National Curriculum Framework (2005) and NEP (2020) advocate for inclusive and gender-equitable education, gender is still seen as an optional rather than essential component of teacher preparation programs. Studies such as Siddiqui (n.d.) have noted that gender is discussed in a shallow manner, leaving little room for critical thought or practical application.

Critique:

It is imperative that gender awareness be incorporated into teacher education programs as a continuous element rather than only as a one-time session or lecture.

Theme 3: Institutional Practices and Teacher Attitudes

Research has demonstrated that teacher attitudes, infrastructure, and institutional norms influence how gender sensitization is seen and implemented (Devi et al., 2021). For instance, girls and kids who identify as gender non-conforming frequently lack safe places in educational settings. Furthermore, the way that pupils are disciplined, given duties, and encouraged to participate is influenced by the conscious or unconscious biases of teachers.

Insight:

Role-playing, storytelling, and field observations are examples of experiential learning activities that must be incorporated into pre-service teacher education in order to combat internalized biases.

Theme 4: Role of Co-curricular and Informal Learning



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According to Khemchandani & Kakkar (2020), including gender sensitivity into extracurricular activities is a better way to affect attitudes than lectures. However, the majority of teacher preparation programs lack enough framework or evaluation for these kinds of exercises.

Critique:

Although the suggestion is encouraging, it is challenging to expand or institutionalize these initiatives due to the absence of quantifiable results.

Theme 5: Intersectionality in Gender Discourse

By demonstrating how caste, religion, and class interact with gender, Vishwambaran & Dibakar (2021) created the concept of intersectionality. The efficacy of teacher preparation programs in diverse classrooms is limited because these complications are rarely taken into account.

Insight:

In order to train teachers for the sociocultural variety of Indian schools, future programs must incorporate intersectional frameworks.

Theme 6: Inadequate Research and Evaluation

The majority of research either concentrates on effects at the school level or makes theoretical recommendations without conducting field tests. There is a dearth of comprehensive evaluation of gender training modules for teacher educators, as demonstrated by Joshi (2008) and Masood (2021).

Critique:

The long-term effects of gender sensitization training on teacher views, pedagogy, and student results are not well documented in the literature.

Implications for Education / Educational field

Policy Implications

The significance of gender sensitivity and inclusion is acknowledged clearly in government initiatives such as the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020. NEP highlights gender justice, equality, and value-based education as essential components of high-quality education. Studies (Siddiqui, n.d.; Khemchandani & Kakkar, 2020) reveal that, in spite of these policy announcements, there are insufficient tangible modules, reflective practices, and measuring indicators to successfully integrate gender-sensitive methods in teacher education.

The following are necessary:

- Gender studies should be required in B.Ed. and D. El. Ed. curricula.
- Frequent workshops for pre-service and in-service teachers on gender training.
- Creating instruments for gender audits in educational establishments.

Practical Implications

Lack of gender sensitivity in the classroom frequently results in unconscious teacher biases, uneven classroom participation, and the reinforcing of stereotypes (Devi et al., 2021).

- Teachers need to be educated to identify gendered language, unequal treatment, and content prejudice in order to address these issues.
- It is important to mainstream the use of inclusive textbooks, equitable participation techniques, and critical classroom discourse.
- Teachers should provide safe spaces for debate and provide an example of non-discriminatory behaviour.

The long-term advantages of such training starting at the teacher preparation stage are demonstrated by examples from the field (Upadhyay et al., 2023), which indicate that gender sensitization programs in schools decrease bullying and increase empathy among pupils.

Role in Educational Reform

In order to achieve Sustainable Development Goals 4 (inclusive and equitable education) and 5 (gender equality), gender sensitization is essential. In order to provide aspiring teachers with the mindset, abilities, and information to:

- Encourage gender parity in extracurricular activities;
- Question patriarchal standards in curriculum and pedagogy,
- Teacher education institutions must work as change agents.

In addition to gender, caste, religion, and disability, support intersectional methods (Vishwambaran & Dibakar, 2021).

F. Conclusion

Gender sensitization is not a peripheral concern but a central pillar in the process of creating inclusive, equitable, and transformative educational spaces. The review of existing studies shows that while awareness of gender issues is



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growing within the educational discourse, teacher education programmes still lack structured, evidence-based frameworks for systematically addressing gender sensitivity. From textbook content to classroom interaction, and from institutional policy to pedagogical practices, gender biases often operate in subtle but powerful ways. Therefore, teacher preparation must go beyond token inclusion of gender topics and move toward experiential, reflective, and critical pedagogy that empowers future educators to identify, question, and transform these biases.

Practical tactics including module creation, workshops, gender audits, and curriculum revision must be implemented in tandem with policy-level reforms to guarantee the success of gender-sensitive education. Furthermore, such initiatives should be guided by intersectional thinking, which connects gender to caste, class, religion, and ability.

In the end, a gender-sensitive educator actively works to create learning environments that are equitable, respectful, and empowering for all students, rather than only being aware of difficulties. This will enable teacher education to achieve its overarching goal of producing people who are democratic, socially conscious, and sympathetic.

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