

ABSTRACT

114

Title: The study of co-educational and single-sex schooling w.r.t. gender roles, Stereotypes and identity formation.

Keywords: Gender, single-sex and co-educational schooling, gender roles, stereotypes and identity formation, masculinities and femininities

Introduction: Gender as a concept is still commonly misunderstood as 'sex' of a person which is 'biological' while gender is the social construction of the roles and stereotypes prescribed by the society where people get trapped, stereotype them and restrict their opportunities. Schooling becomes a major force which restructures the gender roles from society to children in positive or negative way which influences their identity formations. Besides the enrolment ratio of girls and boys as well as other gender, there are various other processes that operate in the school which construct identities of children in different and stereotypical ways, like teacher-student as well as student-student interactions in classrooms, playgrounds and other spaces in the premises of the school. Also, if such processes happen in co-educational schools, then what happens in single-sex schools both for girls and boys? Therefore, the present study aims to study these processes that lead to differential identities.

The sample for the present study consists of six schools: all boys' government Senior Secondary School (Class 3-12), all Girls government Senior Secondary School, Co-Educational Senior Secondary School, all boys' MCD school, All girls' MCD school and Co-educational MCD school (classes 1-5). 10-20 teachers were taken from each school for interviews. Classroom observations and narratives of children- boys and girls, as well as some teachers were taken. Pictures of the various activities and moments in school are taken. Data are analysed in the form of various themes. The objectives for the present study are 1. To understand the gender identity formation of students in single-sex and co-educational type of schools, 2. To observe different type of practices in single-sex and co-educational schools that reinforces (positively or negatively) gender roles and stereotypes, 3. To know teachers' perception about various issues of single-sex and co-educational schooling in these schools and 4. To know children's perceptions about their schooling and gender in single-sex and co-educational schools. It was observed and analysed from the current research that teachers displayed different expectations and attitudes towards girls and boys in the class in a gender stereotypical way. Boys were seen to get most of the teacher's attention in a co-educational

classroom and respond more in the classroom due to their active behaviour. This was same as is encouraged in the society. On the other hand, in all girls' school, girls were able to put themselves forward, got opportunity to speak and answer the teacher's question in the class. In playground and in recess, whereas in co-educational school, boys played organized games like cricket, football, volleyball and 'gilli danda', girls (only 2-4) played badminton on the sides of the playground or sometimes they chatted and in pairs or three and be on the boundaries of the playground as boys occupied most of the space. While, girls in the all girls' school's playground played freely all over the area. They did gardening and other lifting activities which was done by boys in co-educational school and girls there did only singing, dancing and decoration work. All these activities help in developing various types of skills in girls and boys where boys develop technical and mechanical skills while girls acquire more of aesthetic skills only due to their differential education. Girls were few in senior secondary co-educational classes as there were many cases of abuses as well attitude of parents at low socio-economic culture, not to send their daughters in a co-ed school. Sexual-verbal-physical bullying was also reported in the all boys' school where younger boys were teased by the seniors. Boys were reported to be involved in substance abuse- cigarettes, alcohol as well as drugs. Police used to visit the school many times to inquire about the boys and trace their history as they got involved in crimes like robbery etc. Boys were not happy with the undisciplined nature of the school and teacher absenteeism. Unruly boys used to destroy the furniture of the classes, threaten teachers, disobey them, bully younger boys, bunk classes etc. Teachers and staff attribute this to their background. On the other side, children seem to lose their trust in the education system as well as the unjust society characterized by different hierarchies.

Conclusion: It can be seen as there exists differential socialization of girls and boys in co-educational school; girls find little opportunities in terms of speaking in the class as well as doing different kind of activities which are male-stereotyped. But the condition of all boys' school becomes dismissing as there is vicious circle of reproduction of classes and occupations and teacher's low attitude towards such boys due to their background as well as stereotypes related to boys. It is seen that teachers are still not made gender sensitive and trained according to the new gender sensitive curriculum. There is a need to challenge gender stereotypes and identities to the core so that each individual can develop to the fullest. Teachers have to reflect on their own conceptions, stereotypes, beliefs which not only affect classroom practices but affect their lives too.