



**International Conference on Latest Trends in Science, Engineering,
Management and Humanities (ICLTSEMH -2025)
19th January, 2025, Noida, India.**

CERTIFICATE NO : ICLTSEMH /2025/C0125260

Secondary School Teachers on Gender Sensitive Practices: A Preamble

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ABSTRACT

The secondary school teachers and gender-sensitive practices would highlight how teachers' awareness and implementation of gender-sensitive pedagogy are crucial for creating equitable classrooms and fostering social justice. Such studies often note that limited teacher awareness and the persistence of traditional gender biases can hinder gender-sensitive practices, leading to unequal opportunities for students. Secondary school teachers play a crucial role in shaping the values, attitudes, and social behavior of young learners. Their practices within the classroom not only influence academic achievement but also help in building an equitable and inclusive environment. Gender-sensitive practices refer to strategies, methods, and attitudes adopted by teachers to ensure fairness, respect, and equal opportunities for both boys and girls, while also challenging stereotypes and biases. It also evolved by emphasizing the necessity of gender awareness programs and professional development for teachers to effectively address gender inequality and promote inclusive learning environments. In this article, secondary school teachers on gender sensitive practices: a preamble has been discussed.

Keywords: *School, Teachers, Gender, Sensitive, Practices.*

INTRODUCTION

Secondary school teachers on gender-sensitive practices highlights the crucial role teachers play in shaping students' perceptions of gender, the necessity of gender-responsive pedagogy to promote social justice, and the existing challenges such as unconscious biases and lack of awareness that need to be addressed through teacher training and inclusive school environments. It sets the stage for exploring how teachers can adopt practices that ensure equal opportunities, challenge stereotypes, and create learning environments where all students feel valued and can reach their full potential.

Gender-sensitive practices are vital for fostering equality and respect, as schools significantly influence students' understanding of gender roles, stereotypes, and social norms. Teachers are central to this process because their attitudes, behaviors, and teaching methods directly shape students' perspectives and can promote or hinder gender equality. Gender-Sensitive Practice refers to a teaching approach that acknowledges and addresses the different experiences, needs, and expectations of boys, girls, and other gender identities in educational settings. Many teachers and schools still struggle with gender insensitivity due to a lack of awareness, persistence of unconscious biases, and insufficient training in gender-responsive pedagogy. The ultimate goal is to create



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inclusive, equitable, and supportive learning environments where all students have equal opportunities and can achieve their full potential, contributing to a more just society. The introduction can also indicate that the following discussion will delve into specific strategies, challenges, and recommendations for implementing gender-sensitive practices in secondary schools. (Agarwal, C. & Shukla, N.M., 2017).

SCHOOL TEACHERS ON GENDER SENSITIVE PRACTICES

Secondary school teachers' adoption of gender-sensitive practices is inconsistent, with research showing both awareness and a need for better training to address classroom inequalities. Effective practices include using gender-sensitive language, encouraging equal participation, challenging stereotypes, and providing mixed-gender group work and equal access to resources, which have been shown to improve student performance and create inclusive learning environments. Integrating gender-sensitive modules into teacher education and providing ongoing professional development are crucial steps for creating more equitable schools. Secondary school teachers practicing gender-sensitive pedagogy actively work to create an equitable learning environment by promoting equal opportunities, combating stereotypes, and ensuring fair access to resources and participation for all genders. This involves adapting teaching materials and classroom interactions to be inclusive, using gender-neutral language, providing unbiased guidance, and implementing school-wide policies that support gender equality and challenge gender-based discrimination. (Kalra, D. & Sharma, A. , 2020)

Gender-sensitive practices in education refer to teaching methods, attitudes, classroom management techniques, and institutional policies that actively promote equality and respect between boys and girls. Secondary school teachers play a vital role in creating a learning environment that challenges stereotypes, discourages discrimination, and fosters inclusiveness. Their practices may include using gender-neutral language, ensuring equal participation of both boys and girls in academic and co-curricular activities, integrating gender issues into subject content, and being mindful of differential needs of students.

In secondary schools, teachers are often the first role models outside the family who shape adolescents' perceptions of gender. By applying gender-sensitive pedagogy—such as balanced representation of genders in examples, fair evaluation, equitable classroom interaction, and encouragement of leadership among both boys and girls—teachers contribute to reducing gender bias. Furthermore, their awareness of gender-sensitive practices helps in preventing harassment, promoting self-confidence in female students, and nurturing respect for diversity.

Thus, examining the role of secondary school teachers in gender-sensitive practices provides insights into how education can move beyond traditional biases and contribute to building a more equitable society. (Kohri, N., 2019).



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Key Aspects of Gender-Sensitive Practice

Inclusive Pedagogy: Teachers utilize gender-sensitive learning materials, content, and activities that portray diverse roles and perspectives, avoiding gendered stereotypes in examples and assignments.

Equitable Classroom Environment: This includes ensuring equal seating arrangements, fair distribution of classroom materials and tasks, and equal opportunities for participation for all students, regardless of gender.

Challenging Stereotypes: Teachers actively work to dismantle gender stereotypes by encouraging all students to engage in a wide range of subjects and activities, and by challenging biased portrayals in the learning materials.

Bias Recognition: Teachers are trained to recognize and address their own potential biases, which can influence their expectations and interactions with students.

Gender-Neutral Language and Communication: The use of gender-neutral language in the classroom and respectful communication practices are essential for creating an inclusive environment.

Mentoring and Guidance: Providing gender-sensitive guidance and counseling helps all students explore future educational and career paths without being limited by gender-based stereotypes.

School Policy Integration: Effective gender-sensitive practice extends to supporting school policies that promote gender equality, such as anti-bullying measures addressing gender-based harassment and policies ensuring equal access to facilities.

Challenges for Teachers

Limited Understanding: Many teachers lack sufficient understanding of gender issues in education, leading to a lack of conscious effort to address gender inequality in the classroom.

Biased Practices: Teachers may unconsciously perpetuate gender biases by favouring one gender over another in subjects or class interactions, such as calling on boys more frequently in math and science.

Resource Inequality: Unequal access to facilities like libraries, labs, and sports equipment for boys and girls can hinder equitable education.

Effective Gender-Sensitive Practices

Inclusive Language: Using gender-neutral language and avoiding gendered stereotypes in communication is a key aspect of gender-sensitive pedagogy.



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Equal Participation: Teachers should encourage equal participation from all students, ensuring that girls are not belittled and boys do not dominate discussions.

Challenging Stereotypes: This includes avoiding gender-based stereotypes in teaching materials, classroom roles, and daily interactions.

Gender-Mixed Groups: Creating mixed-gender working groups can significantly improve students' academic performance.

Equitable Resource Allocation: Ensuring fair access to all school facilities and resources for both male and female students.

Improving Teacher Training and Practices

Professional Development: Teachers need ongoing gender sensitization and in-service training to reshape their pedagogical practices.

Curriculum Enrichment: Teacher education programs should incorporate modules on gender and education to equip future teachers with the necessary skills.

Supportive Policies: Implementing school-level policies that promote gender equity in teaching and learning is essential.

Raising Awareness: Raising gender awareness among teachers and school leaders is a critical first step toward creating a more gender-sensitive environment.

Significance

Gender-sensitive practices by secondary school teachers are significant because they challenge gender stereotypes, foster a more inclusive and equitable learning environment, reduce discrimination, and prepare students for a fairer society. Teachers play a vital role in shaping students' worldviews, and their attitudes and behaviors, influenced by gender-sensitization training and inclusive curricula, impact students' self-esteem, confidence, and future career choices, particularly in gender-stereotyped fields like STEM. (Sewani, A. & Kabra, A., 2019).

Impact on Students

Reduces Discrimination: Gender-sensitive teachers help create a safer and fairer environment, reducing instances of discrimination and violence against all genders.

Enhances Self-Esteem and Confidence: When students know they are in an inclusive setting, their confidence in their abilities increases, fostering greater academic success.

Challenges Stereotypes: By integrating gender-sensitive content and practices, teachers can effectively dismantle traditional stereotypes and encourage students to pursue their interests regardless of gender norms.



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Promotes Inclusivity: Gender-sensitive education promotes respect, understanding, and inclusivity among students, helping them become more aware of gender issues.

Teacher's Role in Shaping Future Society

Role Models: Teachers act as role models, and their mindful actions and perspectives can directly shape a child's understanding of gender roles.

Shaping Worldviews: By fostering fairness and equality, teachers contribute significantly to building a more equitable society for future generations.

Influencing Career Paths: Teachers' encouragement and provision of information about diverse careers can influence students' perceptions of what's possible, counteracting gendered expectations in fields like STEM.

Teachers Implement Gender Sensitivity

Mandatory Training: Implementing mandatory gender sensitization training in teacher education programs equips educators with the necessary skills.

Curriculum Integration: Reviewing learning materials to remove gender bias and integrating gender-sensitive content into the curriculum is crucial.

Pedagogical Practices: Teachers should use strategies like case studies, stories, and group discussions to challenge stereotypes and encourage inclusive classrooms.

Mentorship and Role Models: Providing mentorship and ensuring representation, such as encouraging more female teachers in STEM, helps inspire students.

Key Findings and Implications

Teacher Awareness vs. Practice: Many teachers recognize the importance of gender sensitivity, but a gap exists between awareness and the consistent application of gender-sensitive pedagogical practices.

Need for Professional Development: Comprehensive and continuous professional development programs are essential to equip teachers with the necessary knowledge, skills, and confidence to implement gender-responsive teaching methods.

Institutional Support: Institutions must provide robust support systems, including gender-sensitive curricula and policies, to foster equitable learning environments.

Challenging Stereotypes: Teachers are pivotal in challenging gender stereotypes by ensuring equal opportunities for participation, providing diverse role models, and creating a respectful classroom atmosphere.



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Fostering a Gender-Responsive Culture: A systemic shift is required, involving not only teachers but also school leaders and policymakers, to create a school culture that actively supports gender equality and nurtures the full potential of every student.

Recommendations for Moving Forward

Mandate Training: Implement mandatory, comprehensive gender-sensitization training for both pre-service and in-service teachers at the secondary level.

Develop Practical Tools: Provide teachers with structured guidance and practical tools, such as inclusive lesson plans and strategies for countering biases, to support their implementation of gender-sensitive practices.

Review and Update Curricula: Ensure that school curricula are gender-sensitive, promoting equality and challenging stereotypes in content and presentation.

Promote Inclusive Classroom Environments: Encourage practices like balanced questioning and participation, equal distribution of classroom duties, and the use of gender-neutral seating arrangements.

Address Institutional Barriers: Actively work to transform institutional cultures and challenge gender-based social expectations that hinder the progress of gender-sensitive education.

CONCLUSION

A gender-responsive education helps students realize their full potential by fostering a sense of belonging and providing an environment where they can express themselves freely. Gender-sensitive practices contribute to a broader societal goal of gender equality by cultivating positive gender equity ideologies from a young age. By challenging stereotypes and promoting diverse perspectives, teachers help students develop critical thinking and the ability to engage with the world in a more inclusive and equitable way.

The role of secondary school teachers in promoting gender-sensitive practices is crucial for ensuring an inclusive, equitable, and respectful learning environment. Teachers act as both facilitators of knowledge and role models, and their attitudes, classroom interactions, and teaching methods significantly shape students' perceptions of gender equality. By incorporating gender-sensitive language, balanced representation of both genders in curriculum materials, and equitable classroom participation, teachers can challenge stereotypes and foster mutual respect among students. (Erdamar, G. et al., 2016).

Furthermore, continuous training, institutional support, and awareness programs are essential to strengthen teachers' capacity for adopting gender-sensitive approaches. When effectively implemented, such practices not only promote fairness within schools but also contribute to shaping a more just and progressive society. Thus, secondary school teachers stand at the forefront of building a generation that upholds gender equity as a core value.



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In conclusion, secondary school teachers need ongoing, targeted training and professional development to effectively implement gender-sensitive practices, which is crucial for addressing gender inequality and stereotypes in the classroom and fostering inclusive, equitable learning environments for all students. While some teachers demonstrate awareness of gender issues, inconsistent application of gender-sensitive strategies highlights the need for systemic support, practical tools, and institutional commitment to gender-responsive education. Addressing ingrained attitudes and institutional expectations through comprehensive initiatives is vital to empower girls and contribute to a more gender-equal society. (Yuden, Y., Chuki, S., Dorji, T., 2020).

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