

Review of Student's Achievement & Gender Bias in Co-Education and Same-Sex School

Dr Nisha Tyagi

Lecturer,
St. Thomas's College of Education,
Greater Noida

Coeducation or the same sex school which will be best, it becomes a concern for the parents once they start thinking about the schooling of their child. There are many parents pondering over this question. In India, where the gender bias is quite evident in the society has almost become a necessity. But what about the quality education? A selection of the school based on the sex does not provide the guarantee of children's safety at the same time of good education.

Rationale

This paper will examine the differences in boys and girls and will critique these differences by relating them to the benefits and disadvantages of same-sex schooling and co-educational schooling. It will also examine whether or not same-sex schooling provides more opportunities for girls to excel academically. Same-sex schooling is defined as schools attended by exclusively boys or exclusively girls. Co-educational schooling is defined as schools where both boys and girls attend together.

Socialization is defined as the teaching of societal norms that define masculine and feminine gender roles. Stereotypical masculine roles are often seen as dominant, a connection to physical activity such as sports, non-academically orientated and less emotive. Stereotypically feminine roles are often seen as more passive, less physically active, more academic and more emotive.

The word "sex" will be used to describe the biological difference between boys and girls and the word "gender" to refer to the social characteristics of boys and girls (Salomone, 2003). An additional question that this paper will explore is what are the effects of same-sex schooling and coeducational schooling on boys and girls? The research reviewed has shown that there are differences in the ways that boys and girls learn as well as differences regarding self-esteem. These differences may affect the ability of boys and girls to learn effectively.

Self-esteem is a topic that has focused on girls and the ways in which it affects their academic performance as well as their overall well-being and success in life. Peer relationships are connected to self-esteem and identity because of the relative importance of peers to adolescent gender identity.

This paper will attempt to examine these issues as they relate to boys and how they are affected educationally and emotionally by gender issues that are related to the way that boys and girls are socialized in our society. The research articles explored will include the United States as well as other countries such as Wales, Hong Kong, Australia, Norway, New Zealand, Scotland, Belgium, Canada, Germany and England in order to explore the questions posed more thoroughly.

Same-Sex Schooling

Same-sex schooling is defined as schools attended by exclusively boys or exclusively girls. These schools appear to have many benefits for boys and girls because the different learning styles between boys and girls could be more specifically addressed in a same-sex environment. Additionally, same-sex classrooms would include only boys or only girls but within a co-educational school.

Present Scenario

There are some who'd vote hands-down for single-sex education. They do find reasons enough. They say their differences in both the genders and thus their physical and psychological requirements. This means the two genders don't need an equal training. Other than the two opposite genders being distractions, it is a well-established fact how the brains of both the genders evolve, develop and function. To teach them better, to help them develop better, they say it's good to keep them separate. Also, there are researches that say girls and boys prefer different subjects, and thus should be focusing likewise.

There was a time, if we go back in recent history, when males were considered to be superior to females. Education wasn't even considered for women who were supposed to stay at home and do household chores, while men were supposed to go out, learn new things for being a better clergy, leader, etc. However, it was gradually realized women need to know a lot more to be a better mother, wife and teacher. And thus, came out the need to have educational institutions for women too. However, what the women were to be taught was very different from what men were to be educated about, so the curricula had to be different.

Co-education

Meaning of co-education education also known as mixed gender education. Co education is a system of education where males and females are educated together where is single sex education was more common up to the 19th century mixed sex education has become standard in many cultures particularly in western countries, single sex education however remains prevalent in many Muslim countries the relative merits of both systems have been the subject of debate.

History

As earlier mentioned, when females started joining their male counterparts, along with the rise of demand of education, there started a rise in demand of equality too. For example, while men were so used to being engineers, women too started being engineers, so they'd need to get trained equally. The idea was met with lots of protests initially, but eventually was well-accepted by many. And there were reasons. With the women handling their household chores, fulfilling the needs to an entire family, it eventually came out that women needed some education more than what they have been receiving till then. And then, as the women started practicing professions that men did, an equal education became all the more important.

Present Scenario

When the students study sitting next to the opposite genders, it becomes obvious that they'd be friendlier with each other, be better adaptable with each other, understand each other better. If anyone start thinking of what the students will come to face when they are out of schools and colleges, they would like our wards to study in co-eds.

When they claim that girls are not apt at boys in subjects like Math, Chemistry, Physics, etc., while there are boys who are not as apt as girls in English, Communicative writing, etc., shouldn't anyone try to give them an environment where they can adapt and learn from each other.

While there are many parents who worry about the safety of their wards, it has been reported that the students who are in co-ed institutions feel safer than those who are in single-sex education. Also, these students knowing they have been trained as equal as their opposite gender, develop more confidence when they face the real-life out of schools and colleges. Sharing ideas, opinions, judgments becomes easier for them thus giving them a wider arena to wonder and explore. There also have been reports that the learning ability also increases when with opposite genders.

Since the two genders study together, they come to respect each other and thus becomes easier for them to be friends. The overall percentage of bullying and harassment in co-eds is way lesser in co-eds.

It has been developed as a fact that girls from co-ed schools contribute more to the classroom activities than those in single-sex education. Also, contradicting those who say girls are inept in technical subjects, girls from co-eds have been reported to be as good as boys in Math, Chemistry, etc., and boys in co-eds do equally good in subjects English, Communication, etc.

Review of Previous Studies

Various studies have been conducted in this regard. The studies were scientific in nature and even some of them came out with the very specific findings in the context of academic results, behaviour and excellence. Some of the studies reviewed are as under.

Gurian stated that boys need more physical activity than girls in order to learn (Gurian& Stevens, 2005). What seems to be the biggest indicator of the benefit of same-sex education for girls is the opportunity to be in an educational environment where they would not be competing with boys for the teacher's attention. Orenstein described the "hidden curriculum" where girls are treated differently from boys by their teachers (2000). The "hidden curriculum" is the 2 unintended education teachers give to students through their actions as compared to their specific verbal instruction. This form of implicit instruction tends to favor boys' education over girls.

Middle school students face a gauntlet of influences that affect academic achievement, including higher academic expectations, a larger, more diverse school population, and changing classes throughout the day (Ricken and Tere, 2004). In addition, middle school students must also learn to relate to many different teachers instead of continuing the elementary model of having just one or two teachers. As middle school students mature, they become more peer dependent than parent/teacher dependent for decision-making (Portner, 2000). Gurian (2001) quotes one middle school teacher describing the school experience as: "Jumping to conclusions, veiled threats, immense stubbornness, communication mess-ups, feeling as though students live in a world of constant and daily potential for stress and even confrontation.

If middle school is not exactly a battlefield, it is certainly a place of stress and strain." Adding to the turmoil for these students is the onset of puberty. An increasing interest in, curiosity about, and fascination with the opposite sex creates direct competition for a child's academic focus (Reimer, 2002).

Studies indicate that there is a significant drop in academic achievement for both sexes at the middle school level (Sadker and Sadker, 1994; Sommers, 2001 ; Bradley and Manzo, 2000; Funk, 2004; Lipsitz, 2000; Brodhagen, 2000) and that there is a substantial achievement gap between the sexes (United States Department of Education, 2000; Dwyer and Johnson, 1997; Conlin, 2003; Newkirk, 2000; Sommers, 2000; Pomerantz, 2 Altermatt, and Saxon, 2002; Simpson, 1991).

Girls outperform boys in reading and language skills, while boys outperform girls on math concepts and spatial skills (Salomone, 2003; Brown and Fletcher, 1995). Boys are more likely than girls to be referred for special education services, particularly for learning and behavior disorders, and are more likely than girls to be referred to the principal's office for discipline violations (Gurian, 1996; United States Department of Education, 2004; Sax, 2005).

Boys are also more likely than girls to be retained and/or drop out of school (United States Department of Education, 2004). According to the West Virginia Department of Education (2004), these differences in achievement and behavior are significantly greater for at-risk students (i.e.,

students who are defined as minority, low-socio-economic, and special education). There is increasing evidence from brain research that points to a biological basis for these differences in academic performance and behavior (Gurian and Stevens, 2004).

At all age levels, girls hear and listen better than boys (Cone-Wesson and Ramirez, 1997;). Translating this fact to the classroom, Gurian and Henley (2001) state that: “Girls are generally better listeners than boys are, hear more of what’s said, and are more receptive to the plethora of details in a lesson or conversation.

This gives them great security in the complex flow of conversation and thus less need to control conversation with dominant behavior or logical rules. Boys tend to hear less and more often ask for clear evidence to support a teacher’s or other’s claim. Girls seem to feel safe with less logical sequencing and more instructional meandering.” Girls are also able to interpret facial expressions better than most boys and men can. Boys are more interested in movement than girls. These differences have to do with sex differences in the anatomy of the eye (McClure, 2000).

Since the majority of middle school teachers are female, one might conclude that female students would respond to 3 class activities in ways that are more familiar and acceptable to their teachers than will boys. According to Gurian and Henley (2001), girls receive approximately 60 percent of the A’s, while boys receive approximately 70 percent of the D’s and F’s. Ninety percent of the discipline problems in schools come from boys, and boys constitute 80 percent of the dropouts.

Boys are more apt to engage in learning activities that are loud, competitive, movement-oriented, and geared to their interests (Gentry, 2002; Thompson and Ungerleider, 2004). Most girls flourish in low-pressure, nonconfrontational, and non-time-constrained academic tasks (Sax, 2005; Gurian and Henley, 2001; Sadker and Sadker, 1994; Stabiner, 2002). Traditional interpretation of the Federal Title IX law has until recently prohibited separating the sexes for educational purposes (Salomone, 2000), thus most of the research on single-sex schooling has come from the private school sector.

There was a significant difference in the reading/language arts performance of middle school students based on their assignment to single-sex or mixed-sex classes. Student achievement in reading/language arts was significantly higher for those students enrolled in single-sex classes.

Conclusion

There was a significant difference in the reading/language arts performance of middle school students based on their assignment to single-sex or mixed-sex classes. Student achievement in reading/language arts was significantly higher for those students enrolled in single-sex classes.

There was a significant difference in the math performance of middle school students based on their assignment to single-sex or mixed-sex classes. Student achievement in math was significantly higher for those students enrolled in single-sex classes.

There was a significant difference, however, in math performance in middle school students when disaggregated by special education status.

Other observation

Living in the 21st century, students need to be prepared of what comes next, reflecting the future. The ideas suggesting girls won't be able to compete in Math and Physics along with boys, boys can't compete in subjects like Home Science and creative writing are not accepted by the latest generation, neither the parents nor the students. What needs to provide our students and wards is a rich environment, without limitations or just the required limitations. Making this environment gender-rich gives students a space to bud themselves, presenting and accepting diversified opinions, which though are not a part of school curricula, but comes along with co-education.

Single-sex education might be a comfortable way to education, comfortable not for the students but for the parents and their orthodox views and traditions coming out of which they find tough. Co-education will throw some challenges on the face of our wards, co-education will throw yet bigger challenges on the face of parents, will directly challenge some of our customs and traditions, but isn't that what as a society-whole need to fight against?

While jot this down, already can hear some parents talk of security of their girl child. And then questioned who'd better be able to face a danger incident, a girl who's been only among girls and has never faced guys or a girl who has studied sitting next to guys, who'd know her rights? The issue of consensus there can be a flip side to co-ed style as well, but that's where parents, teachers, schools need to strike a balance.

Some of the studies described the differences between the perceptions of boys and girls toward same-sex classes. The majority of girls had positive reactions to same-sex classes, whereas the majority of boys had negative reactions to same-sex classes. Same-sex classes did not seem to be as helpful for boys as they were for girls.

Girls' gender identity was affected by coeducational schooling because they were more likely to have a more stereotypical feminine identity. However, girls also described themselves with "masculine" traits which could be related to academic success and teachers' expectations of students' behavior in co-educational schools.

Girls' compliance with traditional female roles in co-educational schools seemed to be related to acceptance from peers. Boys' gender identity did not seem to be affected by school type. However, many articles suggested that boys' behavior was more manageable in co-educational classes due to the influence of girls who were more motivated in the classroom.

The relationship of achievement and teachers' assessment was the topic of a large majority of the studies. Teachers' and students' perceptions of the two types of schooling were also explored. Teachers' bias related to gender equity were part of the articles that discussed gender beliefs and perceptions.

Overall, the academic success of boys and girls showed no significant difference between same-sex and co-educational schools. The significant differences were students' perception of their academic success as well as teacher's and parent's perceptions.

The differences in the socialization, peer relationships and self-esteem of boys and girls appeared to be significant. A major weakness in most of the studies was the lack of socioeconomic and racial diversity of the students involved.

Several of the studies had confusing data in which the total number of subjects studied was unclear. Another major weakness in the majority of the studies that focused on same-sex versus co-educational schooling included schools that did not participate in adequate training for teachers on gender equity, peer relationships related to gender, classroom practices and curriculum that was gender inclusive as well as training on teacher bias related to gender.

These are all aspects of teaching training and education that should be a mandatory part of teacher education programs as well as continuing professional development.

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