

SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION OF BOYHOOD IN SCHOOLS OF DELHI

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Introduction

In the context of education, 'social system' refers to the internal organization and processes of education analyzed as a coherent unit which is distinguishable from other aspects of society. Education cannot be divorced from its social setting because those engaged in education are also the ones who carry with them the symbols and orientations that identify them as members belonging to distinct sections of society. Children bring with them a certain culture. They have learnt certain patterns of speech, certain habits and certain orientations to life from their family and neighborhood. Children do not drop their accent or style of dress soon after entering a school. These are often subtle yet deeply ingrained. Social background is relevant to the analysis of the relationship between education and socialization because it orients a child to enter into certain patterns of association, or to have certain responses to the school. Social background, however, is not the only factor. Peer relationships are equally important.

Children develop a set of relations among themselves and their teachers in school. Factors that contribute to the manner in which these relations develop are, the division of school into classes, extra-curricular activities in school, grading of pupils between and within classes, the attitudes of teachers, the values emphasized by headmasters and teachers, and the social background of pupils. These factors place a pupil in a set of social relations that establish him or her in a particular position in the school. It may encourage a child to succeed in accordance with the set goals of the school. This position may also contribute to a child's failure. Any educational organization that ranks and differentiates students is likely to raise 'self-fulfilling prophecy'. Irrespective of their intelligence in comparison with children in other classes or other schools, those who do not rise high are likely to be treated by other pupils and teachers as slow or stupid. Unfortunately, over a period of time the pupils come to believe this leading to considerable decline in self-esteem.

The objective of the paper is to understand

- the meaning of the process of social construction as well as the gender construction;
- How the process of gender construction operates in our society
- discuss how different socio-cultural settings influence the experience of childhood
- The dimensions and implications of gender construction of boyhood in schools;

Human beings are social animals, right at birth the child enters into a social world – a world of family, friends and community. It is with this world that the child develops a lasting relationship, a relationship characterized by love, learning and growth. For the child it is an ever expanding world as s/he graduates from home to school and to world of work and citizenship. The essential issue to understand is that there is a complex interplay of variables which operate in the child's world directly and indirectly. In this paper we will try to understand the child's social world, a world in which she/he is living, growing and interacting directly, a world in which she/he is learning the ways of the community.

For a layperson sex and gender may be one and the same, but for a sociologist these are different and distinct value-loaded concepts. Sex simply means the biological identity of an individual, of being male or female, which is innate. Whereas gender can be either of biological sex (female or male) and the role expectations attached to that biological identity. The biological identity of an individual is inherent but the role

expectations attached to that biological identity is not inherent in them; they are external to the individuals and inculcated to them through various social, cultural and institutional agencies. What does that mean? A baby is born as female or male sex. The baby wouldn't be aware of the behavioural attributes attached to her or him as being female or male. A set of attributes exclusively identified with the gender is acquired by individuals from their early childhood through the processes of various social agencies. This acquired behaviour is exhibited by them throughout their life. This gender identity is constructed and inculcated into the individuals by external agencies.

History of Childhood

If one analyses history one will realize that meaning and description of children varies across time periods in history. A French historian called Philippe Ariès, analyzed how children were depicted in history. Using works of art, letters, and many other sources he explored how the meaning of childhood evolved from medieval times onwards to the present

Philippe Aries' wrote that childhood is a very new concept. It did not exist at all in the Medieval period. He found there were no children depicted in paintings of that era. There were only very young babies or adults. All those who were not babies were painted in adult dresses, with adult body language, and adult-like expressions. Most young people were apprenticed, became workers in the fields and entered the adult roles at a very early age. Even 'people' of around seven years of age were seen as little adults, and not as children.

The Medieval cultures lacked the concept of childhood. Childhood is a later historical creation. It came into existence among the rich people (upper class) in the 16th and 17th centuries. It further developed in the 18th century among the upper class. And it finally emerged on the scene in the 20th century in both the upper and lower classes. Once the institution of childhood began to emerge, the situation of the young person began to change in society. First they were named children. A theory of innocence of the child emerged. Children were to be protected from adult reality. The facts of birth, death, sex, tragedy and adult world events, were hidden from the child. Children were increasingly segregated by age.

—Philippe Aries (1962), *Centuries of Childhood*

Another thinker, John Holt, writes about young people and their place, or lack of place, in modern society. He talks about the institution of modern childhood, the attitude, customs and laws that define and locate children in modern life and determine, to a large degree, what their lives are like, and how we, their elders treat them. And also about many ways in which modern childhood seems to him to be bad for most of those who live within it and how it should and might be changed.

—John Holt (1974), *Escape from Childhood*

There have been different ways in which childhood has been perceived in different times in the history of civilization. Therefore, childhood is not a given; it is a concept which develops through adults' lenses, and ways of perceiving young growing-up people in the society.

Childhood in Modern History

Children have been regarded as miniature version of adults with no special needs and attributes during most of the human history. The way we think about children today is influenced by European enlightenment, industrial revolution and colonization. The normative ideas associated with childhood are also influenced by democracy and individualism, on one hand and rise of urban leisure class on the other. Prolonged battles by progressive educators and reformist thinkers led to the realization of the United Nation charter of children's right. Scientific discoveries and inventions helped control infant mortality, improved sanitation and public hygiene and eradicate common illnesses.

In developed countries the survival rate among children has improved and developing countries are also catching up depending upon their access to scientific and industrial advancements.

Paul Hazard pointed out certainty and predictability of life as central features of the child's nature in modern history. The mental attributes of a desirable childhood is threatened by rise of terrorism. The industrial revolution of the 18th and 19th century saw the rise of the working class which fought hard for the recognition of childhood as a protected and prolonged period of life. Further the rise of capitalism ensured that special efforts were made to acknowledge the psychological demand of children in terms of toys, books and other colorful concepts. The institutionalized care for health and education though grew at a very slow pace. The rise of childhood as a social construct in the 17th century Europe provides a benchmark for non-European world to judge their own development. Europe experienced improvement in public hygiene and saw an emergence of middle class which valued its privacy and family and recognized sexual innocence as the hallmark of the childhood. Majority of children in the world lived in poverty and oppression, struggling for survival and falling to common diseases.

“The mid nineteenth century prototype of childhood as a protected socio- psychological category continued to serve as an undisputed norm and educational ideal throughout the world”.(Krishna Kumar)

The United Nation Charter recognized childhood as a global concern after the two world wars Post war scenario saw nations acquiring freedom and embracing democracy. Though newly independent nations achieved limited success in controlling child mortality , universal access to schooling, childhood got its legal and political recognition

Childhood as A Social Construct

Sociologists have always been concerned with the development of the child inasmuch as their theories of social order, social stability and social integration depend on a uniform and predictable standard of action from the participating members. In this sense then, they begin with a formally established concept of society and work back to the necessary inculcation of its rules into the consciousness of its potential participants – these are always children. The process of this inculcation is referred to as ‘socialization’. Sociologists are not ignorant of the biological character of the human organism but are singularly committed to an explication of its development within a social context. The socially developing model of childhood does share certain chronological and incremental characteristics with the naturally developing model but it largely avoids, or indeed resists, the reduction to explanation in terms of natural propensities or dispositions. The socially developing model is not attached to what the child naturally is so much as to what the society naturally demands of the child (Mary Jane Kehily 2009 :102)

Many of the childhood experiences are universal, yet each child experiences childhood in different manner because of different socio-cultural settings. One of the factors which influence the experience of childhood is gender. It determines the way a child is expected to talk, dress, and behave as well as the values inculcated in her. Boys are given more importance than girls and this result in discrimination against girls in matters of food, clothing, education and love and attention of parents. This bias gets pronounced when resources are scarce. The social class to which the child belongs determines the facilities and opportunities available to her. For children belonging to the lower social class many basic needs and desires remain unfulfilled. Economic necessity forces the children to take to work at an early age. Children may sometimes be working under hazardous circumstances and may be out of school. Children belonging to the middle and upper social class do not lack the essentials of life and most children attend school. Religion provides values, attitudes and beliefs that outline a code of conduct for the child. The family is the nucleus of the child's life and has a great influence on her. The type of family the child lives in and the interaction among the family members influence her development. Ecology has an impact on the type of skills and abilities the child acquires. Whether the child lives in a rural, urban or tribal area, near the coast in the plains, in the hilly regions or desert areas determines her lifestyle to a large extent.

Understanding of Self, Identity and Society

The concepts of self and identity are widely discussed and differently defined and explained in different streams of social sciences. Self can be said as the conscious, reflective personality of an individual in totality and identity as the distinct personality of an individual that is regarded as a persisting entity. The issues of self and identity are frequently used in the symbolic interactionist theories. According to the interactionist theorists self reflects society that means society shapes self, which in turn shapes social behaviors. For them society and self are unorganized, unitary and unstable. However, the structural symbolic interactionists visualizes societies as highly differentiated yet organized systems of interactions and relationships encompassing wide variety of cross cutting lines based on social class, age, gender, ethnicity, religion and more. Here self is seen as multifaceted, as comprised of a variety of parts that are sometimes interdependent and sometimes independent of other parts,

sometimes mutually reinforcing and sometimes conflicting and that are organized in multiple ways. Each part is an identity formed external to the self, based on role expectation. Thus self is conceptualized as sets of discrete identities or internalized role designations. For example the self is a totality of a set of identities of as being a particular gender, caste, race, class, etc. and the role expectations attached to each identity. By this we understand, identities are self-cognitions tied to roles, through roles to positions in organized social relationships. It is also argued that identities vary in their salience. That a given identity can be invoked in a variety of situations or it can be defined as differential probability. Thus choice between or among behaviours expressive of particular roles reflects the relative location of the identities associated with those roles (Singha Roy 2004).

Identity and Construction of Gender Roles

It is argued that the individual self and identity are socially constructed. We as individuals living in a society imagine or construct various social process or phenomena as well as our own social identity based on our everyday observations, experiences and encounters with other individuals in other society. Individuals develop different identities based on their interactions with their fellow beings. The sense of community and fellowship relates closely to the idea of social identity of an individual self (Singha Roy 1999). There are strong influences of the community and the people with whom an individual self identifies and associates (Ibid). In that sense, gender (the acceptance of self as female or male sex and the roles and expectations attached to that sex) as one of the identities of an individual is largely created by her/his social interactions and influenced by the community. The process of social construction of gender identity is closely associated with the culture and institutional arrangements of the society through which it operates. Thus we can say gender identity is not universal but culture specific discursive construction and cultural identity is continuously formed (Hall 1990). This implies that gender identity is cultural specific and socially constructed, which shows variations across time and space.

Social Construction of Gender

Social construction is a social process in which both individual and other social processes are intrinsically related. Every construction or image of the world is influenced by the individual's experience of society and his / her interaction with various social process.. Social construction itself carries subjective biases as it is shaped by individual experience. Social construction is also influenced and controlled by the interests of dominant group or class of group. In this sense, the culture, norms, ideologies and values of the influential group are used to justify and sustain particular form of social construction. Hence social construction through which we understand the everyday life try to classify people on the basis of caste , class ,religion community ,kinship , gender and so on. The classification of people is the product of social construction and also forms an integral part of the social processes. Social processes such as a primary socialization and the presence of social institutions help to produce and accepted kind of social construction. Hence gender is the product of such social construction.

Construction of Gendered Roles

Gender is understood as social, historical and cultural construction explained on the basis of sexual difference and the connections built between both the sexes. Construction of gender is multidimensional. The phenomenon of gender construction has bias in social cultural institution economic historic etc. The construction of gender determines the range of choices or options open to women and men. These choices are linked to work and production process, to mobility or seclusion, dress, behavior and so on. Thus the sexual division of labour in society and family, role allocation and stereotyping property and inheritance, distribution of authority and governance and most importantly the unequal concentration of power and status of men and women in society depict the pattern of its gender construction. Gender category varies from society to society. Hierarchies between women and men obtain in terms of resources, control over choices and social evaluation of roles. Thus gender construction of girlhood and boyhood favours and perpetuates the unequal status of sexes, which invariably gives a subordinate status leads to the discrimination and marginalization of female sex in the society.

It is argued that the child as individual self and identity are socially constructed. We as individuals living in a society imagine or construct various social process or phenomena as well as our own social identity based on our everyday observations, experiences and encounters with other individuals in other society. Individuals develop different identities based on their interactions with their fellow beings. The sense of community and fellowship relates closely to the idea of social identity of an individual self (Sen cf. Singha Roy 1999). There are strong influences of the community and the people with whom an individual self identifies and associates (Ibid). In that sense, gender (the acceptance of self as female or male sex and the roles and expectations attached to that sex) as one of the identities of an individual is largely created by her/his social interactions and influenced by the community. The process of social construction of gender identity is closely associated with the culture and institutional arrangements of the society through which it operates. Thus we can say gender identity is not universal but culture specific discursive construction and cultural identity is continuously formed (Hall 1990). This implies that gender identity is cultural specific and socially constructed, which shows variations across time and space.

School and the Child

School is an important part of child's world, and an important socializing institution. We all have some very pleasant and not so pleasant memories of our school days. It is at school that we learnt to sit quietly for hours, take turns, stand in rows, work on tasks and so on. There are a number of things that the child learns at school – some are taught in a very explicit way while others are part of the school culture and the child imbibes these as they are part of the school environment. In other words the form and content of the learning material, the organization of the school, the daily classroom social relationships, the structure and organization of the curriculum; the attitudes of the school staff all together form the school experience that deeply influences the child. It however needs to be understood that each of these aspects are not neutral but are deliberate choices, often determined by the dominant ideology in the society.

Krishna Kumar demonstrates it is very difficult to visualize equality of attributes in childhood of girls and boys. The dice is loaded heavily against the girls. Between the age of 5 and 11, the physical and intellectual capacities grow. The girls face restrictions and control as far as their physical movements are concerned. They are made aware of their developing physical attributes and are actively denied intellectual pursuits. The girls are forced to accept certain customs and rituals which have a very negative impact on their childhood. On the other hand the childhood of boys is allowed to blossom in all its glory unabashedly. Childhood of girls is further embarrassed by highlighting the concepts of matrimony and motherhood to a girl long before puberty sets in. Therefore according to Krishna Kumar there cannot be a common construction of gender which is compatible with girlhood.

Keywords Defined

Masculinity

Masculinity is defined as roles and responsibilities to be acquired by male members who are socially constructed in our society. These are known as masculine traits e.g. Strong ,powerful, bread winner, head of the family etc.

Femininity

Femininity is defined as roles and responsibilities to be acquired by female members which are socially constructed in our society. These are known as feminine traits. e.g. passive , receptive, taking care of domestic work.

Boyhood

the period when a person is a boy, and not yet a man, or the state of being a boy. The above mentioned definition implies during the period of childhood boys acquires the masculine traits. The understanding of boys that they resemble with male members in their family and society. Their understanding of roles and responsibilities are to be carried as male.

Girlhood

the period when a person is a girl, and not yet a woman, or the state of being a girl. The above mentioned definition implies during the period of childhood girls acquires the feminine traits.

The understanding of girls that they resemble with female members in their family and society. Their understanding of roles and responsibilities are to be carried as female.

Social construction

Social construction is a social process in which both individual and other social processes are intrinsically related. Every construction or image of the world is influenced by the individual's experience of society and his / her interaction with various social processes.

School as A Sight of Construction of Gender (Boyhood & Girlhood)

Girls and boys have different socialization experiences. By the time they enter nursery school, most of them have a fair understanding of their gender identity which is largely acquired from parents, siblings, television and other socialization agents. The term, 'gender role' refers to expectations regarding proper behaviour, attitudes, and activities of males and females. 'Toughness' for example has been traditionally identified as a trait of men while 'tenderness' has been viewed as a trait of women. As the primary agents of socialization, parents play a critical role in guiding children into gender roles that deem them appropriate in a society. Other adults, older siblings, the mass media and religious and educational institutions also have a noticeable impact on a child's socialization into gender identity.

Students spend more than six hours a day in classes and school related activities. Therefore, teachers and schools become important sources of information on appropriate behaviour for boys and girls. Children learn by observing and imitating adult roles including the roles of teachers and administrators. They observe the ratio of males to females and the authority structure in the educational hierarchy and Learn appropriate behaviour for main gender through positive and negative sanctions. Social learning theory explains that gender images are transmitted through books, television programmes and children's toys. Of these three areas,

it is the sexism in books that has received most attention. In particular, Lobban (1975) has examined the extent to which reading schemes in the infant and junior school transmit sexist images through the characters used, the illustrations and the portraits of males and females and the use of stereotypes.

Children's toys play a major role in gender socialization. Boys' toys –chemistry sets, doctor kits, telescopes and microscopes etc. - encourage manipulation of the environment and are generally more career oriented and more expensive than girls' toys. Parents are generally very conscious of buying toys that are appropriate for the gender of their children. By the time young children reach nursery school they have learnt to play with the appropriate toys for their sexes. Delamont (1980) has provided an analysis of toy catalogues that illustrates how the girls' toys emphasize passive domestic roles, while the boys' toys emphasize action, adventure and career growth. In turn, the images of girls presented through television and other media lay emphasis on subordination and passivity. McRobbie (1978) confirmed this in an analysis of the schools girls' magazine, Jackie in which stories reinforce the idea of a girl being subordinate to a boy. Sexism in textbooks too has received a great deal of attention.

Books are a major source of messages about sex roles. Content analysis of texts is based on illustrations, positive and negative images of men and women, stereotypes, and many other factors related to the portrayal of sex roles in the societal systems. While classrooms may be co-educational, many activities within the classroom are gender-linked. It has been found that girls do not receive the same attention as boys do. Boys are encouraged to solve problems while girls are provided the answers readily. Girls are often asked to water the plants while boys are asked to clean the blackboards. Children line up for activities by gender. Even imposition of discipline and quantity of time a teacher spent with children have a bearing on gender differences. Studies establish that boys are disciplined more harshly than girls, but they also receive more time and praise from the teachers. Interestingly, teachers' expectations are based on students' gender, class, and race. Why do boys perform better than girls in mathematics most of the time? Most researchers explain that the difference in mathematical ability results from differential socialization and differential experiences of boys and girls. These commence in the primary school itself. Boys are encouraged to be independent thinkers and develop creative ways of dealing with mathematics rather than following rigid norms of mathematics formulae. Though much has been made of the difference in mathematics score between girls and boys on standard tests, these differences are not significant and need to be considered in the light of social and cultural factors that ban girls from participation in achievement in mathematics and science. Cross cultural studies of differences in parental support, teacher expectations, study habits and values, beliefs that affect achievement indicate that girls in some countries do excel in mathematics.

Nandini Bhattacharjee **through the looking glass 1999 gender socialization in Primary school** explained that tasks within the classroom are assigned on a sex differentiated system in which tasks magnify the gender dichotomy, catering as it does to the notion of girls as “dutiful daughters” and boys as “roughhousing rouses”

Davin (1979) found that schools imposed the family form of the bourgeoisie with a male breadwinner and a dependent wife and children - a view that influenced the pattern of girls' schooling. Purvis and Hales (1983) identified two models of femininity that were used in schools, the 'perfect wife and mother' for children belonging to the middle class, and the 'good woman' for children belonging to the working class. In the school curriculum, a set of assumptions about women and marriage were included with the result that they were able to perpetuate an education system that does not open up new opportunities for most girls. In a similar vein, Miriam David (1985) has illustrated how courses on family life and parent education within the youth training scheme and other post-school programmes emphasize education for motherhood. Such evidence from the 19th and 20th centuries has been used to illustrate the way in which education maintains relationships, particularly gender relationships in society.

Religion

Most modern religions are patriarchal, defining male authority as supreme. They present a patriarchal order as being supernaturally ordained. The feminine principle of power which existed before the evolution of institutionalised religions has been gradually weakened, goddesses have been replaced by gods. All major religions have been created, interpreted and controlled by upper class and upper caste men; they have defined morality, ethics, behaviour and even law; they have laid down the duties and rights of men and women, the relationship between them. They have influenced state policy and continue to be a major force in most societies; in South Asia their power and presence are enormous. In India, for instance, in spite of the fact that it is a secular country, a person's legal identity with regard to marriage, divorce and inheritance is determined by his or her religion. Religions have constructed stereotypes about men and women in their own ways. The Christian stereotype of woman is seen as Eve, who has been blamed for instigating events leading to the original sin. The Indian myths explain how the world was created, treat 'brahm' the creator as an androgynous entity - an embodiment of half male and half female. Traditional Indian society is primarily based on agriculture and establishes a symbiotic relationship with nature. Femininity is linked with prakriti (nature) and prakriti with leela (activity). The concept of adyashakti (original power) is entirely feminine. There is sufficient analysis now to show how almost every religion considers women to be inferior, impure, sinful; how they have created double standards of morality and behaviour; how religious laws often justify the use of violence against "deviant" women.

Socialization

Leela Dube has studied gender socialization in detail, emphasizes how it is important to understand the subtleties and complexities of gender based socialization in order to understand it fully. She asks the questions, "what does it mean to be a girl? ; how are women produced as gendered subjects?" Leela Dube also says that although gender differences are culturally produced , it is claimed that they are part of the natural order of things – or rooted in biological based difference. According to her, 'Gender roles are conceived, enacted, and learnt within a complex of relationships.' She explains how girls are not received happily in families , given the low sex ratios and prevalence of female foeticide. She has cited several songs and rituals performed at the birth of girl/ boy children to substantiate her point. She further elaborates on how proverbs and folk songs pass a message to the girls that they are a temporary member of their natal families. One such proverb that she cites goes like this: A father who takes care of a girl is actually watering a plant in someone else's garden!

The Nobel prize winner, Amartya Sen has worked extensively in the area of famines, poverty and low sex ratio (we will read about sex ratio a little later). He has pointed out that it is not only socialization that is based on gender differences that is problematic, the very idea of **gender based entitlement** also does not work in the favour of girls. Girl children have lesser access to resources- to food, healthcare, nutrition, inheritance of property and also access to information.

Gender in Everyday School Life

As researchers have closely looked within classrooms, they've found patterns of practices that lead to the construction of masculinity and femininity in various ways. Some of the issues that emerge in this connection are:

- Curriculum and its selective portrayal of men and women/ boys and girls.
- Knowledge by itself has been understood to be patriarchal. Look up the NCF on Gender Issues in Education to understand what this phrase means.
- Schools exaggerate the differences between boys and girls.

Gender is used in the school as a means of organization, or for social control or disciplining. For instance, you may have seen many times that when children queue up for assembly, they are asked to stand in separate lines

meant for boys and girls. When boy/girl are to be punished for misbehaving, they are made to sit with the opposite gender. These are simple examples where gender is unnecessarily evoked in the school.

Can you think of more such examples? How do children sit in the class? Who distributes the mid –day meal? Who is responsible for the cleanliness of the class? Who is the class monitor? Ponder why was it necessary for the teacher to choose this on the basis of gender, and perhaps you will understand how “gender is everywhere”. Another related debate is that whether it is beneficial to have same –sex or mixed sex groups in schools.

Perception of Teachers Towards Gender Roles Within Classroom

Attitude towards Disciplinary Subjects

Girls should choose arts then science, lastly commerce as business related subjects are good for boys. Citing reason for these girls should take up those courses which supports her family in carrying out home affairs whereas boys are the bread earner of family so they should focus on their work.

Teachers' perception is that girls are good in literary, drawing and social sciences where boys are good in Mathematics, Science and Technology. Boys have more reasoning power whereas girls have good writing expression.

Girls should be passive, receptive and whereas boys are physically strong, aggressive and violent.

Gender Relationships

As we have read above, girls and boys are treated differently from the minute they are born. In interactions between adults and children, we can see different patterns of stereotypes, beliefs and metaphors. For instance there has been a lot of research on how teachers perceive students. Researchers found that there were some themes that repeatedly emerged. Teachers describe good girl students as 'appreciative, calm, conscientious, considerate, cooperative, mannerly, poised, sensitive, dependable, efficient, mature, obliging, thorough. On the other hand, good boy students are described as active, adventurous, aggressive, curious, energetic, enterprising, frank, independent, and inventive. What are some of the differences that you see in these perceptions? Who comes across as more active? Who comes across as passive and obedient?

Roles and Responsibilities given by Teacher

During my observation in primary schools roles and responsibilities given by teacher in classroom is gendered as Boys were assigned the task of minds the boys only. Boys were allowed to go outside the school to bring food for teachers or shopping the material for schools. They were involved in distribution of mid-day meal during lunch .Carry or shift furniture from one place to other. On the other hand Girls were involved to mind the girls only. Task given by teacher includes clean the classroom , black board and table, decorate teacher's register etc and teach both in teacher's absence and when she's busy , read aloud lessons write questions and answers on the blackboard.

Seating Arrangement

Seating arrangement within classroom are organized in such a way girls and boys are not allowed to sit together. This means boys will sit with girls, whenever boys gets punishment in class by his class teacher otherwise they are not allowed to sit together.

Hidden Curriculum

A curriculum encompasses the essential and appropriate knowledge taught in schools. It involves the praxis of policy as well as the syllabi used in the teaching-learning process. Teaching and learning materials, classroom practices, evaluation and assessment procedures and language policy are all components of curriculum are 'learned' in school. It demands investigation of the contexts within which the children make meaning of, or responds to, these notions, through the filter of her/ his subjective experience while growing up as female/ male in society. While it is important to understand the ideologies underlying the presentation of gender in school textbooks, it is equally pertinent to examine how these ideologies are expressed at the level of everyday school practices and experiences, through what is often termed the 'hidden' curriculum.

This curriculum is hidden in the sense that it is not explicitly outlined in the formal work culture of the school. But over the years it has come to be seen as a kind of a norm which nobody seems to be bothered or confused about. It can be organizational arrangement which include division of physical spaces within the classroom and school along gender lines. There is division of labour among boys and girls. Boys are allowed to cross the school boundaries while girls are assigned indoor tasks like sweeping, cleaning gardening. Adoption of different strategies to discipline the students according to their gender. Routines, rituals and practices in everyday school life like segregation of boys and girls while seating, forming teams and sports.

Outside Classroom

Playground and Physical Education

In outdoor play, girls are usually found playing "langdi" (hopping) and versions of hopscotch; whereas boys play cricket with equipment made from throw away material, such as crumpled paper for a ball, or a stick for a bat, or a tree stump for wickets. They also play catching and abadubi (versions of ball and running games).

Indoor games in the classroom usually constitute sequencing of film songs/episodes from television serials for girls and book cricket or horseplay for boys.

The play space boundaries used by girls are usually clearly demarcated before play— either naturally or by the girls themselves – and do not involve the girls moving more than 10 feet away from the central location of play. The boys, however, use whatever space is available and even playgrounds in the vicinity of the school.

School Assembly

In school assembly activities are gendered in such a way that all dancing and singing of prayers are done by girls whereas drum beating, maintaining discipline, line up of classes are done by boys

Participation in Co-Curricular Activities

In school space co-curricular activities are also gendered in a way all the dancing and singing activities are done by girls whereas debates, extempore etc. are offered to boys. In schools there is lack of gender mix activities among boys and girls.

Conclusion

Constructions are being evolved and practiced based on certain values, norms, tradition and customs of the society. However these constructions of social practices are not always value neutral. This is because mostly these constructions are related to power relations in each society and usually these serve the social, economic and political interests of dominant groups in it. The same is true with gender roles. The gender roles are

socially constructed. As the process of construction is culture specific, it has been rooted in the ideological and institutional arrangements of each society.

Education thus preserves, and often increases, social biases present in society. Different socialization experiences of students have significant implications on the kind of personalities or self which children develop, the attitudes, skills and knowledge, they acquire, which in turn affects their achievement level in school. There are certain factors in their socialization, which are conducive to learning in school, whereas there are others, which place the students at a disadvantage *vis-a-vis* school and inhibit learning. To belong to a particular type of family, social class, caste or gender group and be exposed to certain types of child rearing practices have specific implications for the kind of persons we develop into and subsequent development of skills, attitudes, knowledge and linguistic forms, which in turn affects our performance in school. It would be naive, therefore, to assume that school functions in isolation of one's family background. Home and school both constantly interact with each other, to determine a student's overall personality, knowledge level, attitude and educational performance. So, even though the school may appear to be a fair and neutral institution, it works in consonance with the existing differences among people, not just maintaining but at times enhancing these differences to the disadvantage of the marginalized groups.

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