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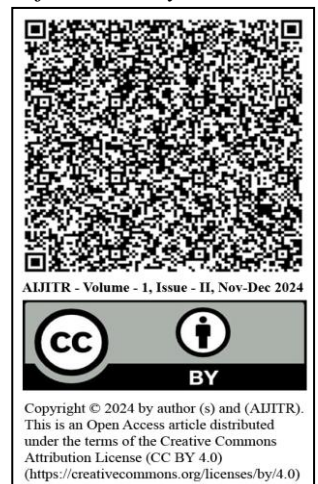
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Addressing the Issues of Gender Equity in Curriculum

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Abstract: Gender equity in education is a critical aspect of creating an inclusive and just society. However, curricula in many educational systems still reflect gender biases, reinforcing stereotypes and limiting opportunities for both boys and girls. This paper explores the challenges related to gender equity in curriculum design, content, and pedagogical practices, highlighting how traditional curricula often marginalize the contributions of women and reinforce gender norms. The paper highlights recommendations from diverse sources such as Commissions on Gender Equity, the SCREAM strategy, and initiatives aligned with the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 of India for addressing gender equity, identification of gender stereotypes in school textbooks and curriculum, efforts in gender sensitization, and their implications for national development. Additionally, a gender-biased curriculum manifests through gendered language, exclusion of female role models in textbooks, and the reinforcement of societal expectations regarding gender roles. Such biases not only affect students' perceptions of themselves but also influence their career aspirations and social interactions. Addressing these issues requires a comprehensive approach that includes revising textbooks to ensure balanced representation, training educators to recognize and counteract biases, and integrating gender-sensitive teaching methodologies. By integrating gender equity into the curriculum, schools can play a transformative role in shaping a more equitable future where students, regardless of gender, can achieve their full potential. This paper underscores the need for collaborative efforts from educators, policymakers, and stakeholders to create a truly gender-inclusive learning environment.



Keywords: Gender issues, Gender equity, Curriculum, NEP 2020, SCREAM strategy.

Introduction

Gender equity and Curriculum are crucial in shaping societal attitudes, promoting inclusivity, and breaking down traditional gender norms. The curriculum refers to the set of courses and educational content taught in schools and other educational institutions. The Millennium Development Goal (MDG) document titled 'To promote gender equity and empower women' rightly advocates that the elimination of gender disparity in primary and secondary education should be minimized by 2005 and at all levels of education by 2015. Gender equity is a principle that states that all men and women need to be treated equally and to have the same rights despite their biological differences. These differences should not prevent them from having the same opportunities to succeed in school and in life (UNESCO). The development of the curriculum to address gender inequity cannot happen in isolation from other aspects of schooling, particularly ways of teaching, learning, and interaction within the classroom. Whatever the content of the curriculum, equity will not be achieved if girls are discouraged from speaking, if boys absorb a disproportionate amount of the teacher's energy, nor if the physical environment does not support equal access to education—for example, the provision of girls' toilets and wheelchair access (Akpakwu, 2009). Only by promoting a culture of gender equity and advocating the concept of gender equity through curriculum reform can we create a gender-equal school environment, achieve true educational equity, and advance the harmonious development of society (Zhai, 2023).

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Gender Equity is a common agenda and part of the plans of the United Nations, World Health Organization, International Labour Organization, United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF), United Nations Entity for Gender Equity and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), and other international organizations which also emphasize the need to address the causes of persistent gender discrimination practices (United Nations Development Programme, 2019). Gender equity in the context of education and curriculum refers to ensuring that all individuals, regardless of their gender, have equal opportunities, rights, and treatment in the educational system. This includes equal access to education, resources, and opportunities, as well as the elimination of discrimination and stereotypes based on gender. Curriculum, on the other hand, refers to the content, materials, and methods used in teaching and learning. Gender equity in the curriculum involves creating a curriculum that is free from gender bias and promotes equal representation of both genders (Patel, 2019).

Meaning of Curriculum

The curriculum is regarded as the sum total of experiences acquired by the learner both in school and outside of it. An acronym, 'CURRICULUM,' best describes the following features (Figure 1).

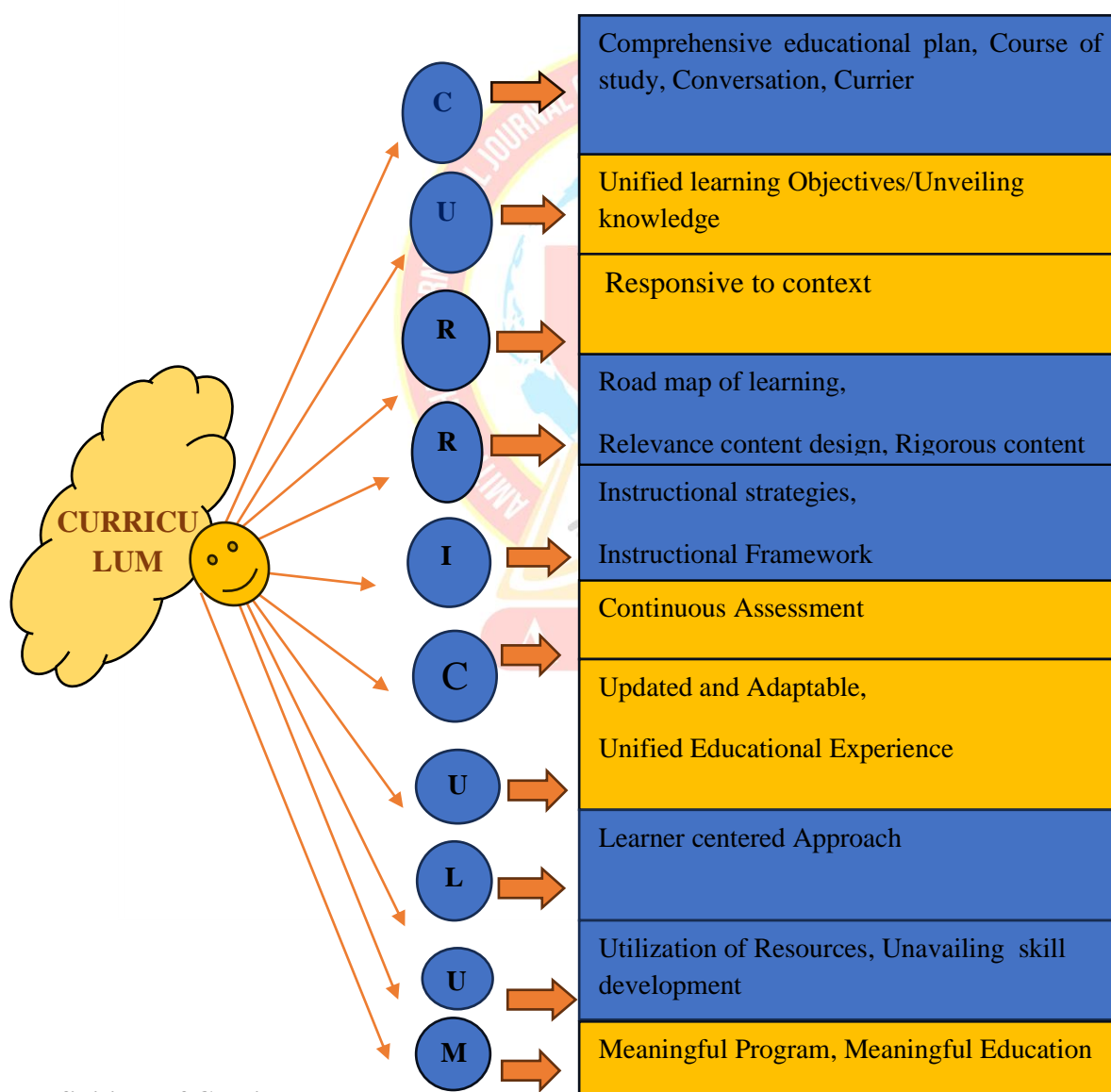
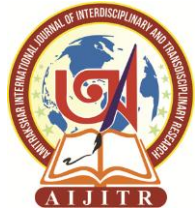


Figure1. Features of the acronym 'Curriculum'

Definitions of Curriculum



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The curriculum includes all activities utilized by the school to achieve the aims of education. It encompasses all experiences a learner has, both within and outside the school's guidance. Several curriculum designers have defined curriculum in their own ways, as stated in the subsequent sections.

According to the 'Mudaliar Commission' (1952-53), curriculum involves the offering of socially valued knowledge, attitudes, and skills at a particular time, made available to students through manifold activities within and outside schools.

Ralph Tyler (1957) defines the curriculum as all the learning experiences planned and directed by the school to attain its educational goals.

Lewis (1974) states, "We define curriculum as a plan for providing sets of learning opportunities to achieve broad goals and related specific objectives for an identifiable population served by a single school center for persons to be educated."

Johnson (1967) describes curriculum as a structural series of intended learning outcomes.

John Dewey defines curriculum as a continuous reconstruction, moving from the learner's present experience out into that represented by the organized bodies of truth that we call studies.

Caswell and Campbell view curricula as "all experiences children have under the guidance of teachers."

According to Cunningham, "Curriculum is a tool in the hands of an artist to mould his material in his studio."

These adjustments enhance clarity and readability while maintaining the original content.

CHARACTERSTICS OF A GOOD CURRICULUM

The characteristic features of curriculum may be best described by the FABRIC formula, as illustrated in Figure 2.

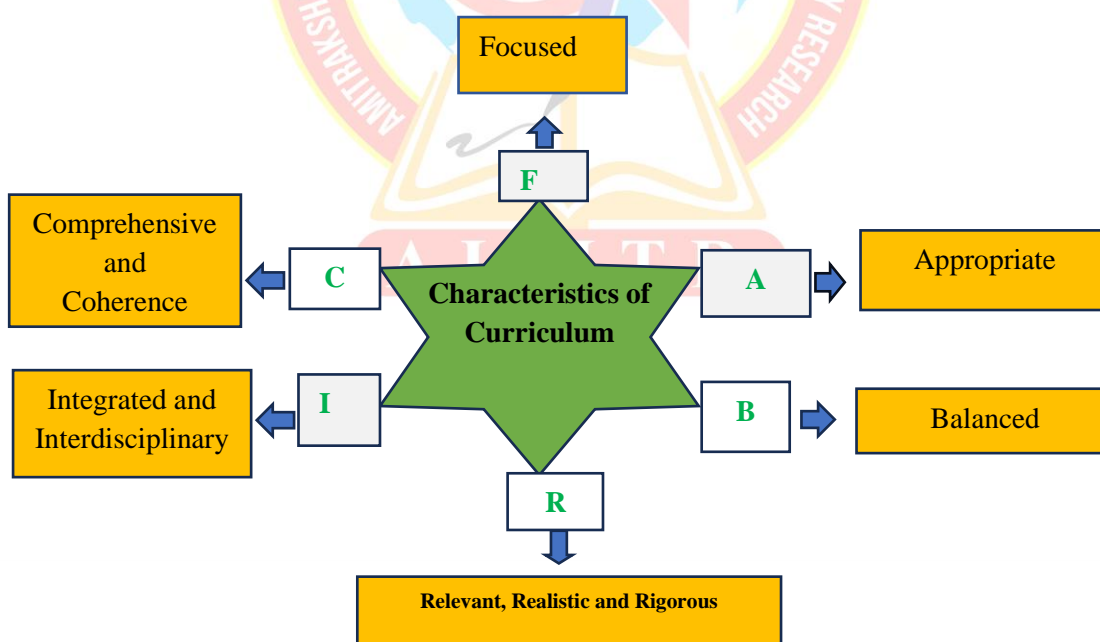


Figure 2. Features of a good curriculum



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Gender equity

Gender equity was established as part of international human rights law by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which was adopted by the UN General Assembly on 10 December 1948. Gender equity, also known as sexual equity or equity of the sexes, refers to equal access to resources and opportunities regardless of gender, including economic participation, decision-making, and the valuation of different behaviors, aspirations, and needs. Gender equity is not only a fundamental human right but also a necessary foundation for a peaceful, prosperous, and sustainable world. While there has been progress over the last few decades, the world is not on track to achieve gender equity by 2030 (as outlined in the Sustainable Development Goals, SDG). The slogan 'Education for All (EFA)' means enrolling and retaining all girls and boys in school; it also entails ensuring that girls and women of all ages develop their potential through education and can fully and equally participate in building a better world. UNICEF defines gender equity as follows: 'Women and men, girls and boys, enjoy the same rights, resources, opportunities, and protections. It does not require that girls and boys, or women and men, be the same, or that they be treated exactly alike'.

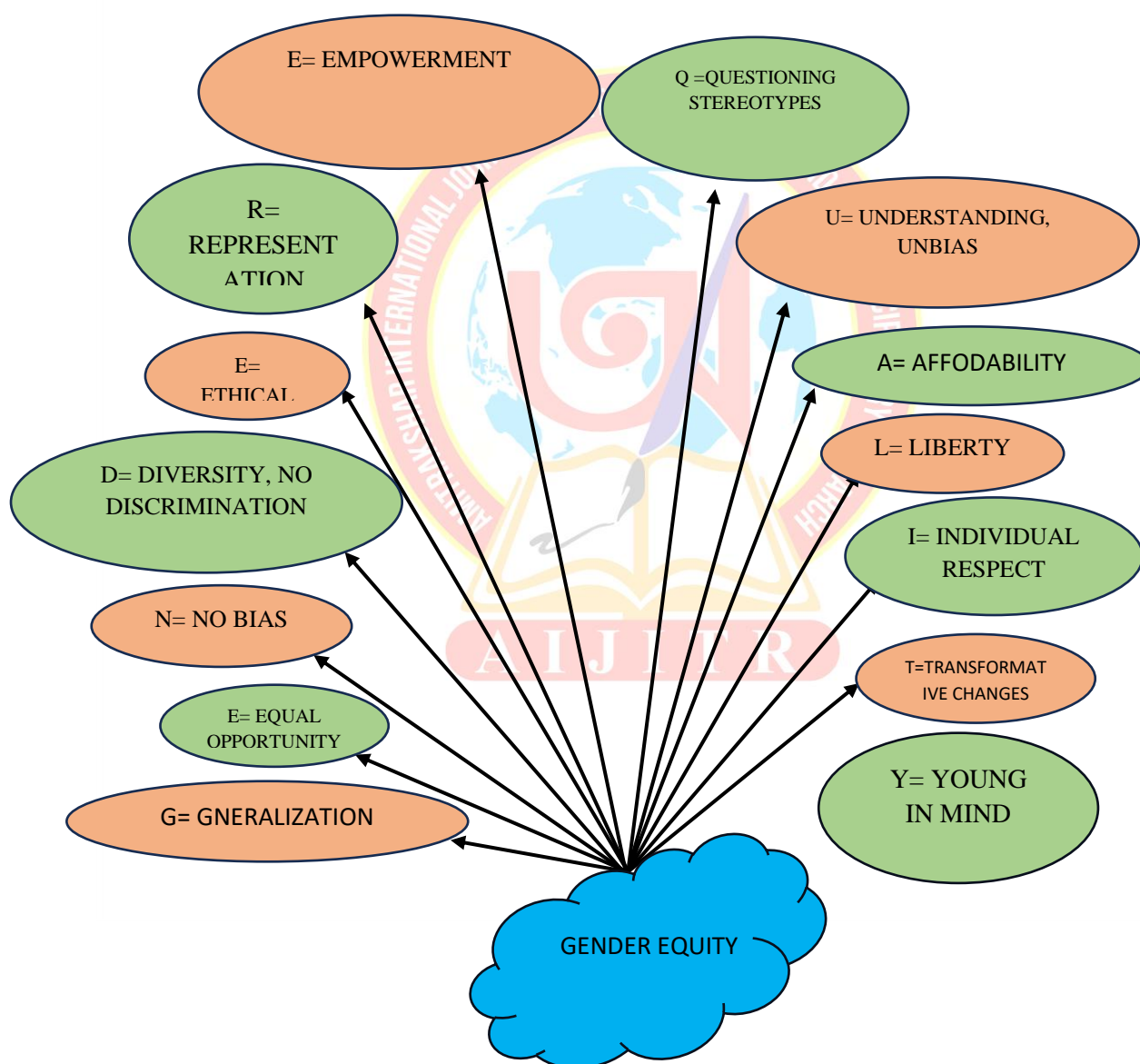


Figure 3. Acronym of Gender Equality



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Definition of Gender Equity

Gender equity is a critical consideration in development. It entails examining how social norms and power structures influence the lives and opportunities of various groups of men and women. Globally, a higher proportion of women than men live in poverty. While gender equality and gender equity are related concepts focused on addressing gender-based inequalities, they have different emphases and approaches. While gender equality focuses on equal treatment and opportunities for individuals of all genders, gender equity emphasizes addressing systemic inequalities and ensuring fairness by recognizing and responding to the diverse needs and circumstances of different genders. An acronym of gender equality is explained in the Figure 3.

Curriculum and Gender Equity

In schools and colleges, the curriculum is usually full, which means it is not easy to integrate a gender equity perspective in the design, content, and teaching approaches of the many subjects that teachers may have to cope with. Moreover, curricula are often developed by experts and 'owned' by the state, so it is difficult to lobby for change where this might be seen to challenge governmental control (Akpakwu, 2009). However, where diversity is recognized and participatory processes are employed, women and girls from different backgrounds can participate in discussions about curriculum decisions and how they are represented, considering that they are diverse groups. When considering how teaching and the curriculum can be made gender-equitable, the following areas need attention.

Curriculum content: There is a need to consider what girls from poor and marginalized environments are offered by their schooling, and to provide, for example, literacy learning in a way that enhances their confidence so that they can begin to transform their lives.

Learning methods: Often, images in textbooks are simply 'check-listed' for their portrayal of gender images. Children do not necessarily have simplistic, preconditioned responses to images in textbooks and need a more sophisticated understanding of and response to how children learn about gender through textbooks.

Language of instruction and literacy: Children who are geographically or culturally marginalized from mainstream education may find themselves being taught in a language that they do not use. Girls and women often have less access to and use of national "prestige" language than men. In what ways is the language of instruction empowering or disabling for girls and boys differently and how can this be ameliorated?

Methods of evaluation and assessment: Examinations tend to dominate assessment, but other methods should be used, such as continuous assessment. In addition, "girls could have more equal opportunities in school if teachers talk to them more and encourage them, for instance by giving them more prizes for participating in different classroom activities". For teaching and the curricula to be gender-equitable in schools, it is important to properly educate teachers on gender equality teaching through the courses and practical materials that are provided. This is discussed below.

Objectives of the Study

The study aimed to address the following objectives:

1. To explore the concept of gender equity in the curriculum.
2. To examine the role of Indian committees and commissions in promoting gender equity.

Research Methodology

The information for this paper has been primarily sourced from secondary sources, including books, journals, government reports, and internet resources.



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Gender Studies: Curriculum Adaptation

Gender studies, as an academic discipline, delves into the social, cultural, and political dimensions of gender. It critically examines how gender identities are constructed, perceived, and experienced in different societies. In recent years, there has been a growing recognition of the importance of integrating gender studies into educational curricula to foster understanding, equality, and social change. This essay explores the significance of curriculum adaptation in incorporating gender studies into educational frameworks. Traditional educational curricula often reflect and perpetuate gender stereotypes, biases, and inequalities. By adapting the curriculum to include gender studies perspectives, educators can challenge these norms and provide students with a more comprehensive understanding of gender dynamics. Curriculum adaptation enables the inclusion of diverse voices, experiences, and perspectives, thereby promoting inclusivity and equity in education. The following are the key components of curriculum adaptation.

1. **Inclusive Content:** Incorporating gender studies content into various subjects, such as history, literature, and social studies, allows students to explore the roles and contributions of individuals of all genders throughout history. This inclusive approach helps debunk stereotypes and fosters empathy and respect for diverse gender identities.
2. **Critical Analysis:** Encouraging students to critically analyze texts, media, and cultural narratives through a gender studies lens enables them to recognize and deconstruct gender biases and inequalities. This analytical skill empowers students to challenge societal norms and advocate for gender equality.
3. **Intersectionality:** Integrating intersectional perspectives into the curriculum acknowledges the interconnected nature of gender with other aspects of identity, such as race, class, sexuality, and disability. By examining the intersecting systems of oppression and privilege, students gain a deeper understanding of the complexities of gender and social justice issues.
4. **Practical Application:** Providing opportunities for students to apply gender studies concepts to real-world situations fosters active learning and civic engagement. Projects, debates, and community initiatives centred on gender issues empower students to become agents of change in their communities.

Challenges of Curriculum Adaptation

Implementing curriculum adaptation in gender studies faces challenges such as resistance from traditionalists, lack of resources, and inadequate teacher training. To overcome these challenges, educational institutions can provide professional development opportunities for teachers, allocate funding for gender studies materials and resources, and collaborate with experts and advocacy organizations. Curriculum adaptation in gender studies is a vital step towards creating inclusive, equitable, and socially just educational environments. By integrating gender studies perspectives into the curriculum, educators can empower students to challenge gender norms, promote equality, and contribute to building a more inclusive society. Embracing diversity and fostering critical consciousness through curriculum adaptation paves the way for a future where gender equality is not only taught but also practiced in schools and beyond.

URL Based Curriculum

A Uniform Resource Locator (URL) is a unique component that identifies or locates a specific resource on the internet within an inquiry-based curriculum. The definition of a URL is a locator or address those points to a specific website, also known as a website address. When someone wants to surf the internet, the most common way is to browse websites. While it may seem easy to search on Chrome or Safari browsers, a lot goes on behind the scenes. These include the complex procedures of protocols and network operations, as well as the web addresses or URLs. (2023).

SCREAM Strategy

The SCREAM learning process finds its foundations in the four pillars of the education approach: "Learning to know, Learning to Do, learning to live together, and Learning to be" (Learning: The treasure within by Jacques Delors, 1996).



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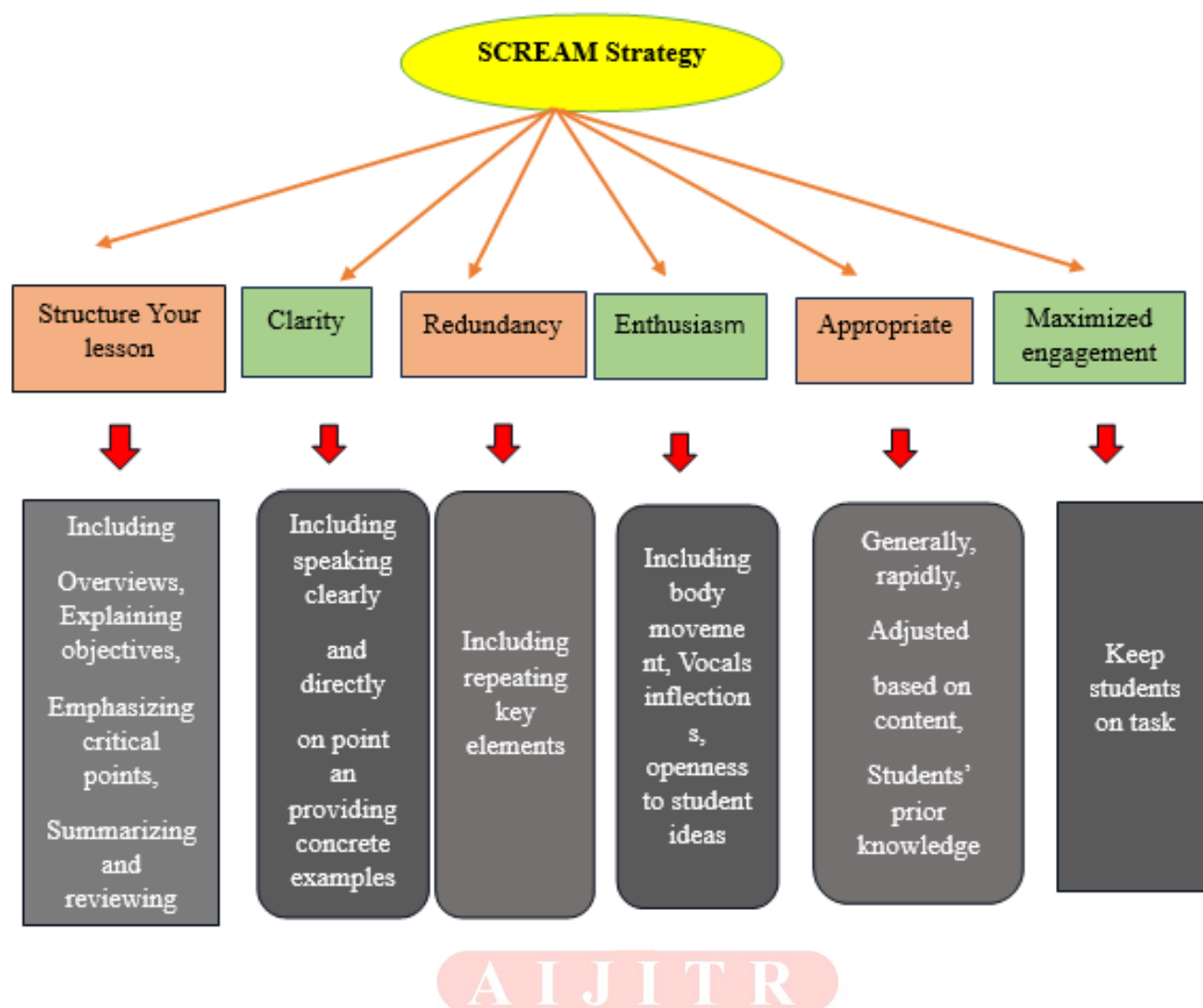


Figure 4. SCREAM Strategy for Gender Equity

Recommendations of various Commissions on Gender Equity in the Post Independent Era

SN	Commissions Name	Recommendations on Gender Equity
1	Radhakrishnan Commission (1948-49)	<p>Scope of gender Equity should be increased and they should be given facilities.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Curriculum will be same for boys and girls. Women should be respected and should be included in indifferent education activities. Female teachers should get some salary like male teacher for same work.
2	Mudaliar Commission	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Girls and boys should get some education Home science should be introduced where girls' study.



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	(1952-53)	3. State Govt. should set up girls' school according to necessity. 4. Art and Music should be introduced in the curriculum of girls and boys
3	Kothari Commission (1964-66)	There should not be any different in curriculum between boys and girls. 1. Home Science will be an additional subject for girls and it should not be mandatory for them. 2. Provision for music and art education should be increased for them. 3. Encouraged to learn Science and mathematics.
4	National Policy on Education (1968 and 1986)	1. First NPE laid down a common scheme for women education studies for both boys' girls. Science and mathematics were incorporated as the compulsory subject. 2. Second NPE took steps of education for women equity and special focus on the education of Scheduled caste, Scheduled tribe and minorities.

Gender Studies as per NEP 2020

Education is the single greatest tool for achieving social justice and equity. Inclusive and equitable education-while indeed an essential goal in its own right- is also critical to achieving an inclusive and equitable society in which every citizen has the opportunity to dream, thrive, and contribute to the nation (NEP, 2020). According to U-DISE 2016-17 data, about 19.6% of students belong to scheduled castes at the primary level, but this fraction falls to 17.3% at the higher secondary level. These enrolment drop-offs are more severe for Scheduled Tribes students (10.6% to 6.8%, and differently-abled children (1.1% to 0.25%), with even greater do lines for female students within each of these categories. The decline in enrolment in higher education is even steeper.

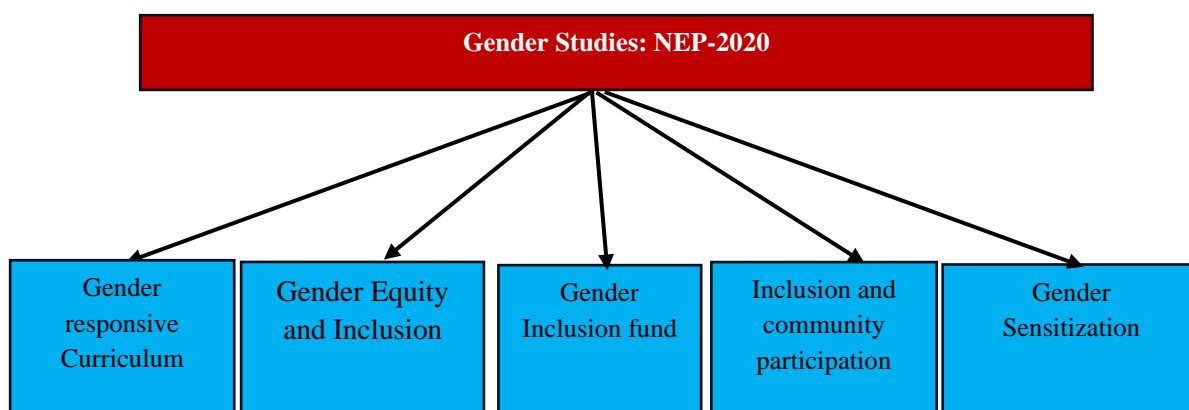


Figure 5. Addressing Gender equity as per NEP 2020

Gender Responsive Curriculum

Teaching and learning processes should pay attention to the specific learning needs of girls and boys. In practical terms, this means that 'the learning material, methodologies, content, learning activities, language use, classroom interaction, assessment and classroom set up are scrutinized to respond to specific need of boys and girls in teaching-learning process (UNESCO, 2017).



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Gender Equity and Inclusion

The intersection of gender with disability acts as a magnifier resulting in further education deprivation. It is fundamental to have an intentional focus on inclusion in education and to tackle the root causes of exclusion, including inequity in the distribution of resources and power and the social and gender norms that perpetuate difference (UNESCO, 2023).

Gender Inclusion Fund

NEP 2020 provides for setting up a Gender Inclusion Fund (GIF) especially for girls and transgender student to build the nation's capacity to provide equitable equity education for all girls as well as transgender students. The objective of NEP for equitable and quality education for girls' children are being met through specific provision under Samagra Shiksha 2.0 by allocating dedicated resources for socio-Economic Disadvantaged Group (SEDGs).

Inclusion and Community Participation

As services and supports continue to become less physically segregated, achieving true social inclusion will continue to be challenging. This is a compelling arena for future research, with many potential directions and aspects for understanding and bringing about inclusive communities. One of the most provocative avenues is extending beyond individuals with disabilities and the services system to understanding and impacting the larger community itself, and this is an exciting frontier.

Gender Sensitization

Gender sensitization refers to the modification of behaviour by raising awareness of gender equity concerns. Gender sensation's theories claim that modification of the behaviour of teachers and parents towards children can have a casual effect on gender equity (Vasundhara, 2020)

Gender Stereotype in School Textbooks and Curriculum

School should provide resources and organize parent-teacher meeting with a focus on gender equity. Parents should be encouraged to carry these conversations at home and instil gender-equal valise in their children. Furthermore, student-led initiatives cab significantly contribute to raising awareness (Eurokids, 2023). Following this School level Curriculum

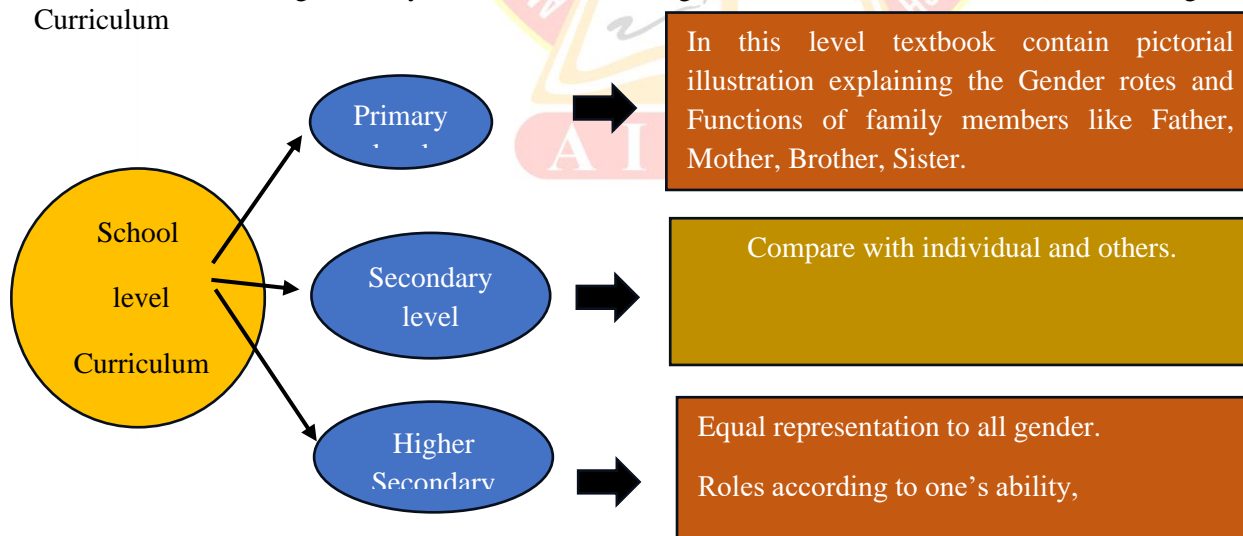


Figure 6: School level Curriculum



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Gender Sensitization and National development

Gender sensitization increases the sensitivity of people at large towards women and their problem. In the process it creates a class of responsive functionaries at different level, from policy making to grass root level, who are convinced that any form of gender bias is an obstacle on the way of attaining an equitable social and economic order and therefore consider addressing gender related issues in their situation as a matter of priority (Dash et al.).

Process of Gender Sensitization and National Development

Gender Sensitization is the process of changing the stereo type mindset of both men and women a mindset that strongly believes that men and women are unequal entities and hence have to function in different socio-economic space. It involves four stages namely changes in perception, Recognition, Accommodation and Action (Vasundhara, 2020)

Change in Perception

Gender Sensitization in first instance tends to change the perception that men and women have of each other. It creates a mind set in men that no longer sees in women that no longer seen in women the stereo typical image. The impression that women are “weak and unequal entity” no more clouds the minds of common men. Rather they are seen as responsible and equal partners in Socio-Economic development.

Recognition

Persons exposed to gender sensitization also start behaving differently. They look at the positively endowed qualities of women. At this the male folk being to recognize the virtues of women and their importance to the family and society. There is open and spontaneous appreciation for women’s involvement in multifarious.

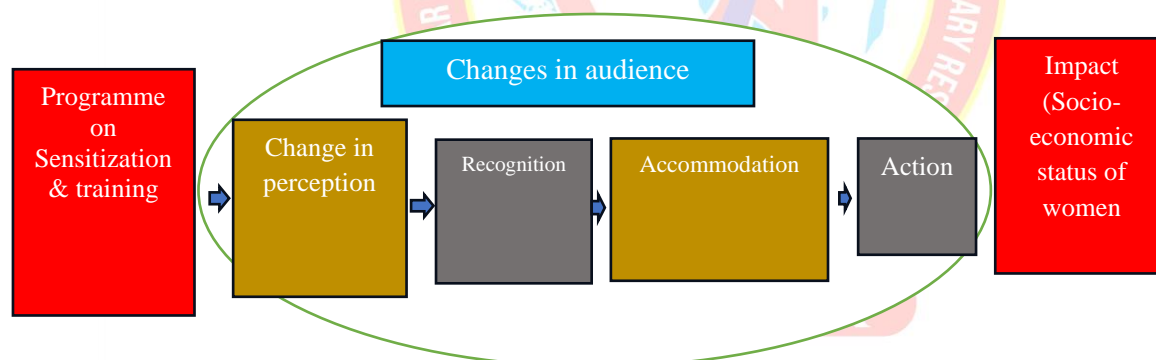


Figure7: Gender Sensitization process

Accommodation

The barrier between men and women starts crumbling down and the society slowly gets over the perennial problem of adjustment between them. Men end to rationalize their behavior by shedding their ego as far as gender relations are concerned. Instead of complaining to the behavior of women, men learn to exercise patience and restraint, and take the thing in a positive way.

Action

Gender sensitized person become instrument of change as far as status of women in concerned. They become action oriented and alert to see that women are neither neglected nor discriminated against and they get their due status in the society. Conscious efforts are made to create a favorable climate that allows nurturing and flourishing of women’s talent and provide more flexibility and freedom to women. There could be gender sensitive policies and programmes



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to allow meaningful participation of women in development and decision-making process, and faster equitable sharing of benefits.

Implications

Gender Sensitization can contribute to women empowerment by hastening the process of both horizontal and vertical flow of ideas, knowledge, information and technology. It can reduce the chance of gender conflict and promote gender harmony thereby creating a congenial climate where in both men and women can perceive and play their role in mutually complementary mode.

Conclusion

Addressing gender equity in the curriculum is essential for fostering an inclusive and fair learning environment. By challenging gender biases, integrating diverse perspectives, and promoting equal opportunities, educators can empower all students to reach their full potential. A gender-equitable curriculum not only benefits individuals but also contributes to a more just and progressive society. Moving forward, continuous evaluation and adaptation of educational materials and teaching methods are necessary to ensure that gender equity remains a priority in shaping the minds of future generations. Promoting gender equity in education and integrating it into the curriculum has significant implications for fostering a more inclusive and equitable learning environment. Developing a curriculum that is free from gender biases helps create an inclusive learning space where all students feel valued and respected, irrespective of their gender.

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