Does Everyone Get A Fair Deal For A Good Education?

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Abstract

This essay discusses discrimination within the education system and answers the question of whether everyone gets a fair deal for a good education, with a particular focus on gender discrimination in developing countries. The aspect covered in this essay is critical because without giving equal and deserved attention to women and preparing them to contribute to society, society will remain at a loss. The developed countries have realized this fact; however, many developing countries are still struggling. Further, the essay also discusses the causes that design and compel the educational systems to discriminate and the resulting factors that those discriminated against experience due to this. Finally, the solutions are presented to avoid this type of discrimination, such as increased inclusion and support from the government, and many other critical factors are discussed.

Introduction

“Education is the foundation upon which we build our future.”

Indeed, Christine Gregoire has rightly identified the importance of education and the role it plays in building our future. The purpose of education becomes even more critical as it impacts and shapes the individual and collectively the society. However, not all people get a chance to have such a strong foundation on which their future must be built. It is due to the discrimination factor that hinders an individual from maximizing his/her potential. Discrimination in education occurs when people who are different in terms of gender, age, financial conditions, religion, nationality, and ethnicity do not get equal opportunities to participate in the system. The world has seen a massive level of discrimination in history, and the differences have caused inequality among people to attain fundamental human rights. This was also recognized by the international community, and as a result, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in International Law declared the attainment of education to be a fundamental human right of individuals in the world. In the contemporary world, discrimination in the education system is still prevalent, and thus, everyone does not get a fair deal for a proper education. This essay shall shed light on the fact that developing countries are struggling with the issue of

discrimination by gender within the education system and how individuals get deprived of their fundamental human rights and are unable to get the maximum benefit out of the education system, which any educational institute is intended to provide.

Background

History reveals that in the past, parents and churches were responsible for disseminating education. After the revolutions in America and France, it became a public duty to ensure education for all and was taken as a duty of the government to provide education to all of its citizens. The state was made responsible for playing an active role in this area by ensuring availability and accessibility to all of its citizens. However, the right to education was not protected at the beginning of the Enlightenment era, and the right was also not discussed in any of the legal documents which could make it binding on the state for this cause. The state was just deemed responsible for ensuring that the parents complied with their duty. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights stated that every individual had the right to get an education. It divides education into three levels, such as primary, secondary, and higher education, but even after declaring education a basic human right, there is one additional factor that the governments in the developed, as well as the developing countries, remained unable to cope with, and that is discrimination in education systems.

Discussion

“Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world.” Nelson Mandela.

Women constitute half of the world’s population; however, they are still struggling to get an equal footing with men, and the educational system is no exception. According to CEDAW (Convention of all Forms of Discrimination against Women), gender discrimination is any distinction made by sex that may impair the execution of any right by women. There are many causes that lead to gender discrimination in the education system.

Firstly, prejudice against women is one of the reasons in developing countries that hinder them from competing in the dominant male environment. This prejudice causes a pre-judgment about the capabilities of men and women and the formation of a negative attitude towards women. Thus, the formation of this pre-judgment tends to generate a negative attitude towards women. It generates negative feelings and classifies women in the category of ineffective. This hampers the chances that they might be treated equally in the education system.

Secondly, the cultural and societal traditions that require women to remain engaged in domestic chores and the sex roles assigned by societies make it useless for girls to be treated equally in the education system. The attainment of education in developing countries for women is treated as a

hobby and not for any productive purpose because, at the end of the day, they have to indulge in their domestic chores, rear children, and become housewives where their round-the-clock work shall remain undocumented.

Thirdly, biological issues also play an important role in treating women differently in the educational system. In developing countries, women are considered handicapped due to their physical weakness as compared to men. Due to these issues, women are often restricted from obtaining education related to various professions they might be interested in.

Fourthly, according to Balatchandirane (2003), the ratio of women who are illiterate to men is 60 percent in Asia. The inequalities that the education systems offer women surround various issues; they range from accessibility to school to competing in school. Research studies also suggest that the estimated enrolment rate for girls is 20 percent less than that of boys in South Asia.

Finally, there are also flaws in the education systems of these countries which cause gender discrimination to creep into the system. These include the divide between the government and private systems, which creates a gap in the unified policies within the country. The private systems bear high costs and are expensive, but they are the systems that provide quality education. On the other hand, public education systems are not up to the mark as proper funding is not provided by the governments of developing countries to uplift their education system. Thus, in this situation, affluent families can only afford quality education for their children, and often, the male child is selected for this privilege. Not only this, but within the institutions, many issues arise that deviate the attention of management from these core issues. The internal issues with the education systems of the developing countries include the lack of resources such as budget and adequate infrastructural facilities. Also, there is a lack of proper training facilities for the staff, so they must avoid gender discrimination among those students who are available to them. Further, low incomes cause staff to find other means of earning. Thus, being underpaid, they remain unable to deliver their maximum potential. Student politics also plays an important role. The education systems in developing countries also face the negative effects of the politicization of the student wings, which they remain unable to control. Thus, any developmental activity to curb gender discrimination at times is hindered by such groups.

Solution

The issue of gender discrimination has been able to receive considerable attention in the past. Various international organizations are working to eliminate gender discrimination in educational institutions as well. As a result of this, various initiatives have been taken, such as preferential treatment of the neglected gender. To protect women from discrimination of any sort, quotas have been introduced in certain developing countries such as India and Pakistan so their accessibility can be ensured. Further, they are also encouraged to participate and complete their educational requirements by offering them preferential treatment. Further, the major issue in incorporating the

complete pool of male and female human resources in the education system is the lack of infrastructure and funding available to the institutions, which can only be overcome by increasing the percentages of the national budget allocated for the uplifting of women and for removing any sort of discrimination against women in the education system. An international organization such as the United Nations has introduced sustainable development goals that incorporate gender equality as one of its major goals. This goal of gender equality covers all domains where equality must be ensured. Various developing countries are bound to comply with these goals and are required to work on these goals to attain positive outcomes.

Conclusions

In a nutshell, it can be said that certain parts of the world are still struggling with discrimination in the education system. This discrimination hinders the individual from utilizing his/her maximum potential. The result of this discrimination affects not only the individual but, ultimately, society as a whole. The results are grimmer in the case of discrimination by gender because excluding half of the population from the mainstream and depriving them of strengthening their foundation so that they could build their future means depriving society of progressing to the extent that it deserves.

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