

The history of gender equality education essay



Gender is the most basic and prominent difference that exists among people, whether they are Hispanic, blacks, white, Asian, native or European. The epic struggle for gender equality in almost all countries of the world is well recognized and acknowledged. For centuries, women were considered inferior to men or as second-class citizens until recently. Strangely enough, very young girls never attended public elementary schools and even when they admitted, they were made to attend a segregated school facility. The passage of 19th Amendment to the US Constitution guaranteed voting rights to US women. The famed, 1973 case of Roe v. Wade in the US Supreme Court eventually resulted in the granting of right to reproductive freedom.

Essential Differences between men and women

Physical differences between men and women are all well known. However, the most prominent difference among men and women relates to the sensitive biological functions that are associated with childbirth, child nursing, early onset of maturity and the smaller physical size. If there are any other differences, they are due to differences and bias caused by the society.

Anthropologically, young boys were always considered as warriors, fighters and protectors of the society and family. A typical man was supposed to be full of vigor and strength. He was also supposed to be competitive and assertive. Men were also supposed to be emotionless and reject empathy, sympathy, fear and freight.

On the other hand, young girls were supposed to be nurturing and passive towards everyone in the family. Furthermore, they were expected to show and exhibit emotions and sentiments. Evolution ensured that young men and women adapted themselves to these typical and stereotypic sentiments and beliefs. They also considered these beliefs to be the natural order of life. The results of these stereotypic beliefs were a deep malaise of the society that eventually resulted in gender bias and resentment.

Educational differences

Early educational research conducted in the last century proposed that there are essential differences between boys and girls, especially in the domain of math, verbal and spatial skills. However, recent research findings suggest us that these perceived differences are false and at best biased. For example, there are not enough differences on class tests between school going boys and girls until the age of 10. Whatever the differences those exist is very minute. There was a perception that indicated that men do better in math tests in high school. However, those differences are beginning to disappear, as even women are doing better in Math tests. In essence, whatever the biological differences that exist between men and women, they are not entirely due to biological reasons.

Methods to challenge female stereotypes

Stereotypic thinking is very common in our society. Gender bias, inequality and disdain for women's empowerment are some of the negative thinking that runs even today. A typical example of this is the perceived change in the attitude about a female athlete's power and ability in the field and track events. In the early parts of the last century, females were discouraged from <https://assignbuster.com/the-history-of-gender-equality-education-essay-essay-samples/>

participating in athletic programs. Athletic programs were not even listed in the sports meets, while the funding for such programs was very scant and rare. In fact, women rarely participated in sports activities. However, all these changed when the government proclaimed that women should receive equal funding under the Title IX of the educational amendment acts of 1972. Due to the changes in the law, women could participate in sports and competitive activities conducted nationally and internationally.

How should teacher act when there is gender stereotyping?

Struggle for gender equality is ongoing and every teacher is contributing to ensure gender equality. In the past, there were instances of teachers falling into trap of gender stereotypic thinking tendencies that eventually led them to believe that boys were superior to girls in subjects like math and science. Such teachers used to call boys to answer their questions in the class and they were encouraged to perform well in verbal and non-verbal tests.

Similarly, girl students were either neglected or even ignored. As a dedicated teacher, you should not fall into the trap of gender stereotype; rather, you should be a powerful teacher to discourage such activities. This may promote and encourage a typical classroom that provides encouragement for both boys and girls to perform better in the class.

More about Racial Prejudice and Discrimination

Gender discrimination in our society always depends on many factors like differences between men and women, presumed male superiority myth and the society's general bias against weaker groups. Overall, the perceived prejudice against some groups in the society could be due to the concept of power relationship that arises as an essential part of socialization process. <https://assignbuster.com/the-history-of-gender-equality-education-essay-essay-samples/>

When young people grow, they always start searching for their personal identity. When you grow through your age, you may ask these simple yet tricky questions:

Who am I?

Why am I here?

However, it is very difficult answer these questions by anyone. While it is very difficult to answer these questions, you may be unconsciously learning about other intricate questions like;

Who are they?

Who they are not

To which race does he or she belong to

What culture does he or she belong to

These simple questions may give rise to sense of ‘ otherness” which may eventually lead to either domination by others or submission by self. It may even result in the creation of pride or shame based on the prevailing stereotype and prejudices as projected by the society. To avoid all these unsavory happenings, you may need to inform your children about the rich cultural heritage of the country, all the while stressing on the importance of different races, ethnicities and cultural groups of the country.

The Great “ Cycle of Poverty”

Black to white relationship provides a very pertinent context for understanding how power relationships reinforce through numerous societal and cultural stereotypes and bias. Research findings suggest is that African American children often accept the beliefs, practices and inherent values of the dominant white societal groups. This could be dangerous because children may develop and propagate negative stereotype and opinion about their own race, culture and beliefs. The 1944 classic written by Gunnar Myrdal (An American Dilemma) has provided us a great start to understand the practical theory of the now famous “ The War on Poverty”. Focused specially on the racism in the US, the author argued that African Americans often are trapped in a “ cycle of poverty” that may eventually lead to the development of unwanted stereotypes and bias.

According to the author, a number of African Americans have little access to high quality education that may result in reduced employment options and eventual poverty and life of hopelessness. This general belief may have led to the stereotypic thinking that African Americans are lazy and that they cannot work well for any jobs. This bias may also result in a vicious cycle of poverty. Federal and state governmental programs like Head Start and Affirmative Action were successful in assisting those people enrolled in public institutions.

How to break the vicious cycle- Your Role

Whites may reinforce the cycle of poverty by believing in the usual stereotypic thinking of Blacks, Hispanics, Asians and other cultural groups.

Strangely, a number of students are blissfully unaware of their own identity <https://assignbuster.com/the-history-of-gender-equality-education-essay-essay-samples/>

as a part of a racial group and this has led to the theory of “color blind”. The result is that as they enter school, then start believing that they are the part of the “in group” that are totally different from other students, who appear diverse in terms of their skin color, shades, textures, language, dialect and cultural upbringing.

It could be a dangerous situation for all children. At this critical juncture, you may wish to work towards creating a mutually conducive and all-inclusive classroom. You may also wish to develop a classroom that actually believes in the rich culture of America. It is your duty to work hard to create a democratic classroom by teaching your students to respect the cultural specialties of different groups. Nature helps children to socialize and streamline their attitude to act in some specific way towards others. Usually, they may never try to understand who they are, but they will definitely start defining themselves by who they are not; this attitude may lead to wrong self-perceptions.

In life, all children would like to see themselves as either colored or non-colored, male or female, dark or fair, young or old or native English speakers or not. They may also like to recognize other differences between themselves and other people. These may include such things as caste, religion, culture, ethnicity, regionalism or even sexual orientation. A multi-cultural classroom will help you avoid developing such a negative tendency among your students. Providing textbooks that are positive in nature and that discuss about the benefits of living in a just society may help you design and create a cultureless classroom. A good teacher will also try to create a classroom that exhibits tolerance, patience and acceptance of all cultural

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groups. It is possible to create a demographic classroom that is tolerant and sensitive towards all people.

Classism – It is the Stain of Materialistic Culture

As a child starts growing into an adult stage, he or she will detect the presence of significant differences in the societal position of their classmates. Some children may be treated as being low in the class; this may mean that they are very poor. Traditionally speaking, people consider material wealth to be above everything in this world. It is also very common to see rich discriminating against working class or even middle class families. Because of their inability to flaunt material wealth in front of others, they are considered as someone who cannot have a status in the society. The media and society play an important role in propagating this class difference. Media advertisement and marketing promotion are the two of the most powerful tools that guide small and young children in believing that using branded and costly products will enhance their social status among their classmates. Most of the brands that are promoted by TV, internet and radio advertisements are premium and expensive.

Occurrence of poverty in the US

On paper, the US is one of the wealthiest nations in the world. However, there are wide swathes of population that are living under poverty line; most people living under poverty line are often referred to as working poor or working class. If you consider the government's own figure, the total number of people living in poverty is a startling 40 million or almost 15% of the entire population. According to the US Census Bureau (U. S. Census Bureau,

2000a), about 30% of all African Americans, 28% of Hispanics and 31% of Native Americans are living below the poverty line.

A country as rich and as wealthy as the US has many traditional myths under its belly – myths concerning the persistence of poverty and wretchedness are common even today. One of the most significant myths that exist today is that those people, who are living below poverty line, do not actually work. Most of the people, who are living in poverty line do work for low paying and menial jobs that do not provide for the minimum comforts and living necessities. Hence, these people are trapped in perpetual poverty. Though they are willing to work, their low educational level as well as paucity in skills, hinder them from getting better paying jobs.

Recent research shows that almost two million people, who are living below the poverty line do work full time. Another 7 million people, who are below the poverty line, actually work part time. However, the most distressing fact about these set of statistics is the perceived numbers of children, who are living under abject poverty. They are the innocent victims of a situation that is not their fault. With very few resources in their hand like books, computers, study materials, you cannot expect them to succeed in their class. Most of the parents, who live under the poverty line, are uneducated themselves and they may not be able to prepare their children for the classroom. As a teacher, you may need to help such parents and teachers to get an access to free study resources like books, computers, public libraries, in school programs and any other benevolent programs that can enhance their skills and intelligence.

Children who live under poverty line – Comparing with other countries

A previous study by a US magazine called U. S. News and World Report, demonstrated that the total numbers of children living in our country is far more than those that live in other industrialized countries. Even after, you consider all those welfare and social security programs, as many as one child in every five live in poverty, which is a very high figure of almost 21. 5%! Just compare this statistics from other countries – 6. 8% for Germany and France, 9. 9% for Great Britain and a very low rate of 2. 75 for Sweden! This significant report also provides a telltale story of why wealthy US children are wealthier than the richest children anywhere in the world – “ Poor children have less to live on- than those in all [industrialized countries] but Ireland and Israel” (U. S. News and World Report, 1995, p. 24).

The available data on those children, who are homeless, are even more startling! Estimated figures suggest us that the total numbers of homeless children in the United States range from 65000 to 500, 000. When you add the nearly 14 million children, who live in some type of foster care facilities, you can imagine the humungous nature of the problem (Jencks, 1994; Sandham, 2001). Classroom classism could be one of the most vicious and worst forms of discrimination. As a teacher, you may wish to eradicate this treachery from your classroom.

What can you do?

As a dedicated American teacher, you can do many things to minimize and eradicate classism in your classrooms. Two examples of actions are as follows:

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Selecting good curriculum materials that plan to minimize classism

Choosing your own actions that are good and just for the entire classroom

Teaching about the accomplishments of working class and poor people in the nation building could help you in minimizing classism. Historical references about labor struggle and racism could also be your potent tools in this direction. You may also teach how reckless spending on materials that we do not require, will lead to material acquiring obsession and wasteful expenditure. You must be a positive role model, who believes in high value performance, cooperation and unbiased and above all with a mind to shun materialism. Make sure that you send out a positive signal to your children.

Journal Activity

Do you agree with gender inequality? Why female stereotypic thinking can harm the larger interests of a society? Do you feel excessive gender stereotyping will harm your teaching? What is your opinion on prejudices and discrimination practiced in a classroom?

Pause and Reflect

Devise a mechanism to fight the Great Cycle of Poverty. Write down notes on why this concept is so critical for ensuring teaching success in a traditional classroom. If you want to succeed as a good teacher, how to you face various instances of gender race discrimination that are so common in a school.

Internet Activity

Collect more information on the Great Cycle of Poverty and occurrence of poverty among schoolchildren in the US. What is your opinion on the Great War on Poverty? By using the information, devise your own role that will assist you in breaking down the vicious cycle of poverty.