

Study of sexism in school



The theme about stereotypes and prejudice is really important in our society. Walter Lipmann is the man, who defines first the term stereotype in his book “How society thinks” (1922). He says that stereotype is something that helps us live in the reality easily. That is the positive said, the negative is, that stereotype thinking stops us from out of the box thinking and open mind. Walter Lipmann also defines the term stereotype – „stereotype is a commonly held popular belief about specific social groups or types of individuals, standardized and simplified conceptions of groups based on some prior assumptions.” Prejudice is a term, which defines our tendency for judging someone before we know him. These terms have a positive said too- they make communication easy for us. But I think that the negatives about stereotypes and prejudice are more than the positives. There are many stereotypes even in the education system. One of the most common stereotypes is sexism. It affects every said of our lives. Almost every men and woman have same stereotypes about the gender roles. The really important aspect of this problem is that sexism is well known in education system and many kids are suffering from it. It begins in elementary school and continues till graduating from college, sometimes even after that. Little boys and girls are constantly told about their gender roles and how they should react and behave, because of those roles. They are given no choice – they should behave as expected and no other way. There is another aspect of the problem. In schools and colleges, teachers and professors expect different results by boys and girls. The boys are considered with less potential and everyone expects lower grades by them. Girls are considered as good in some things, but awful in math, physics and other science like

that. Those opinions can make things really difficult for the children, because they can't show their real abilities and skills.

” Sexism, which entered the lexicon in 1970 as an analogue to racism, connotes a fundamental and pervasive institutionalized bias on the basis of sex, with discrimination usually directed against woman (Frazier and Sadker 1973). The rationale for sexism is the biological difference between males and females that dictates differential social roles, status, and norms (Sleeter and Grant 1988).” From “ Sexism in single-sex and coeducational independent secondary school classrooms” by Valerie E. Lee, Helen M., Marks and Tina Byrd. In thos pharagraf of theyre study, they explain the term sexism. The study begins with explanation that sexism begins way back in the history. Likek other socializing institutions, the family and the church , have inevitably transmitted sociocultural sexism, so did the schools.”
Classrooms, where the process of schooling largely occurs, are primary sites for sexist socialization.”

„ In an ideal world, children would be raised in a society free of gender stereotypes. Such freedom from these stereotypes would allow children to exhibit behaviors and acquire skills

based solely on their personal preferences devoid of the constraints of the societal norms that surround their particular gender (Bem 1983). However, in the real world, from the moment of their birth, children are placed into either a “ boy” or “ girl” category (Bem 1983; Fagot and Leinbach 1993; Kimmel 2004). This seemingly fundamental physiological distinction is automatically surrounded by a system of societal expectations that determine

which behaviors are appropriate for “ boys” and which are appropriate for “ girls” (Fagot and Leinbach 1993) and facilitate the creation and maintenance of gender role stereotypes (Ridgeway and Correll 2004) in Springer Science+Business Media, LLC 2010 Abstract Eagly’s social role theory (Eagly and Steffen 1984).” From this paragraph, we can make the logical conclusion, that something in our society and educational system is wrong. We raise our children in a world, in which these stereotypes are very common. These categories that we put kids in have an effect on their entire life. In school, boys and girls come with some ideas how to behave. They learn that from their family direct, or by coping models of behavior. Since the first grade, everyone continues to expect from children to act as they are told to- like a girl or a boy. Girls can’t play with cars and toy soldiers, because they will become women, and this is not good for a woman. The woman should be nice and tender. If the boys are sometimes a little rude- this is not a problem, because from them this is expected. If they want to play with dolls - this is not write, because they can grow up feminize. This is something that reflects really hard on children psychic. When they grow up, they continue to follow that models of behavior and that is cosign a lot of problems. In the education is the same- the boy should be really good in math, but if he can write, this is a little strange. A girl should write beautiful, but nobody would belief, that she knows a lot about physics. This is a huge problem, because it makes communicating, growing up, developing a hard and intense process, which is put in frame and can’t go out of it- other way the kid is consider as strange.

As an example for that frames may be considered situation of gender and mathematics in England and Wales. Teresa Smart wrote an article on that matter, which explains why girls “abandon science before leaving school” – “Gender and mathematics in England and Wales”. In the article, Smart explains, that the stereotype- boys are good in mathematics is putting girls under pressure and they prefer to focus on other sciences.

The difference between boys and girls are also discussed in the study “Gender differences in mathematical achievement related to the ratio of girls to boys in school classes” by Terje Manger and Rolf Gjestad. This study discusses the importance of the number of boys and girl in the classroom. The authors are analyzing a research, done in 3 grade in classes with many boys and less girls, many girls and less boys, and a class with a balance. The results do not support the single-sex teaching theory. That theory claims, that single-sex school gives an opportunity for developing to both sexes. In that study, authors also prove, that there is a difference between boys and girls in mathematics: The differences in mathematical achievement between boys and girls are well documented in the educational and psychological literature. While the differences in general samples are decreasing (Feingold 1988) disparate proportions favoring boys are well-known in mathematically gifted samples, (Benbow 1988; Benbow and Stanley 1983; Hyde, Fennema and Lamon 1990). The differences also vary according to mathematical subskills. Boys seem to perform better than girls on tasks requiring application of algebraic rules or algorithms, as well as on tasks in which the understanding of mathematical concepts and number relationship is required (Mills, Ablard and Stumpf 1993).

The newest researches on that matter are proving something different- every one of us has different part of the brain developed more than the other. People, who have more developed write part, are with better achievements in mathematics and other sciences like that; people, who have more developed left part of the brain are good in history, literature and other. That is a prove, that the difference is not coming from the gender.

“ From grade school to graduate school to the world of work, males and females are separated by a common language. This communications gender gap affects self-esteem, educational attainment, career choice, and income. But its hidden lessons generally go unnoticed.” “ Sexism in the classroom: from grade school to graduate school” by Myra Sadker and David Sadker. Myra and David Sadker are researching classroom interactions in elementary and secondary schools. Their article is focusing on four of their conclusions of the research. The first conclusion they made is: male students receive more attention from teachers and are given more time to talk in classrooms.” The second conclusion: “ Educators are generally unaware of the presence or the impact of this bias.”. The third conclusion: “ Brief but focused training can reduce or eliminate sex bias from classroom interaction.”. The four conclusion : “ Increasing equity in classroom interaction increases the effectiveness of the teacher as well. Equity and effectiveness are not competing concerns; they are complementary”.

Myra and David Sadker’s first study is proving, that male students are involved in more interaction than females. Teachers are talking more to them and allow them to talk more in class. The teachers observed in this study were both male and female; they represented both white and minority

groups; they taught in the areas of language arts, social studies, and mathematics. This proves, that the teachers were affect mainly by the sexism stereotype in classrooms.

The educators are not aware of the impact of sexism in the classroom. They don't realize, that their behavior in not adequate. They don't understand, that this way they are stopping females developing, and lowing their chances for receiving good education. This unawareness of the educators is a big problem in schools. Sexism cant be removed, when nobody realizes that its there.

All it takes, to removing sex bias from classrooms is to train the educators. They need to know, that sexism has to be removed from the classrooms, that this is cosign problems to females not only in school, but also later, when they are working.

When there is sexism in the classroom, the education process cannot be effective. When teachers are not realizing the problem and can't remove it, they can't be useful to the children. If there is equity in the classroom, the process will be effective, this will increase the chances of children to have a good education.

In her paper : “ Gender freedom and the subtleties of sexist education”, Barbara Houston is discussing the idea of gender-free education. “... the following three distinct meanings. In the first sense, the strong sense, a “ gender-free” education would be one that made active attempts to disregard gender by obliterating gender differentiations which arose within the educational sphere. Another example of this approach is the elimination

of activities, such as wrestling, in which there are thought to be significant gender differences in achievements due to natural and ineradicable biological differences between the sexes.” In her paper, Houston is focusing on the education, that eliminates gender and its ignoring it. The idea is, that gender should be no longer used as a criteria, that boys and girls should not be separated and not be given instructions how to behave, judged by their gender : ” ... “ gender-free” to mean freedom from gender bias. On this understanding, a gender-free education would eliminate gender bias.”

From this sources, discussing the theme about sexism in school, can be made several conclusions. Sexism, as sociological and culture understanding of the gender differences, exist in schools of all kinds. Sexism is the separation between boys and girls, based on their biological differences and affects a lot their education. Male student are given priority, females are underrated- they cannot show their real potential. This is big problem in classrooms, because sex roles are putting educational process in frames, they stop boys and girls to develop, learn everything they want to, not what they supposed to. Teachers sometimes are not aware that there is sexism in their classroom and they don't know how to eliminate it. The good education is one, that is gender-free, which is not focused on the gender differences and is removing this as a criteria for educating.