

# Gender Mainstreaming in Schools, Classrooms and Textbooks: Historical Perspective

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## Abstract

*This study aims to explore how the gender mainstreaming process in schools. Similarly, this study has focused on gender-related content in textbooks. The gender mainstreaming is very important for Nepalese society. So this study analyses gender mainstreaming in schools, classrooms, and textbooks. In particular, gender mainstreaming empowers women in society. Therefore government need to make a good effort to create a gender-friendly environment in schools and textbooks. So how gender mainstreaming helps gender equality is the main concerning part of this study. It is based on field data generated through interaction with the participants. This study mainly dealt with two themes: gender mainstreaming in textbooks, and gender issues in school and class.*

**Keywords:** Gender, mainstreaming, Schools, Classrooms & textbooks.

## Introduction

Gender mainstreaming means the consistent use of a gender perspective at all stages of the development and implementation of policies, plans, programmes and projects. In the education sector, this would include not only the activities of governments, but also those of schools, colleges and education institutions, and, where appropriate, those of NGOs and the private sector as well. Mainstreaming gender differs from previous efforts to integrate women's concerns into government activities in that, rather than 'adding on' a women's component to existing policies, plans, programmes and projects, a gender perspective informs these at all stages, and in every aspect of the decision-making process. Gender mainstreaming may thus entail a fundamental transformation of the underlying paradigms that inform education. Gender mainstreaming is the process of assessing the implications for women and men for any planned action including legislation, policies or programmes, in any area and at all levels. It is a strategy for making women's and men's concerns and experiences an integral dimension in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes in all political and evaluation of policies and programmes in all perpetuated. The ultimate goal is to achieve gender equality (ECOSOC, 1997 as cited in UNESCO 2006).

Many things are expected to be learned from schooling. It includes statements of desired pupil outcomes, descriptions of materials, and the planned sequence that will be used to help pupils attain the outcomes. The total learning experience provided by a school. This

study mainly focuses on the gender mainstreaming process in schools, classrooms and textbooks. Generally, we all desire to provide equal opportunities to be educated for all children. It is heard that the Education Ministry of Nepal has undertaken many steps towards achieving the goal of gender mainstreaming. Gender is a term referred to the parallel and socially unequal, division into feminist and masculinity (Luitel, 2008). However, we can see discrimination in the school and class based on gender identity. There is extensive talk that all children, irrespective of anything, are provided the same platform but the outcome of equal investment sometimes seems unexpectedly unequal. History is a scientific study and a record of our complete past (Ghate, 1972). Our past is related to patriarchal societal norms that are still impeding the goal of eliminating discrimination between males and females. Similarly, we are disappointed to see gender-based discrimination in public places, including schools. Girls seem to have hesitation to express their problems. Therefore, this study tries to find out the technique to promote gender mainstreaming in schools. The major objective of this study is to explore the gender mainstreaming process in schools, classrooms and textbooks and to analyse gender-related contents in textbooks.

**Method and Materials**

This study adopted a qualitative research procedure in an interpretive way. Qualitative research takes place in a natural setting (Creswell, 2003). To derive substantive meaning from uncovered knowledge. For the information/data, the researcher conducted interviews with principal sources and observation, to observe the participant's behaviours as well as circumstances with the help of an observation checklist in a natural setting. Here researcher has derived meaning from analysis and presented the gender mainstreaming process and gender-related contents in textbooks.

This study is based on primary and secondary data from two schools in Kritipur Municipality 5 and 7 of the Kathmandu district to analyze the gender mainstreaming process in schools, classrooms and textbooks. For this purpose, a semi-structured interview was conducted in the study area of four schools. The sample population was taken from four sample schools and Maharjan communities based on purposive sampling.

**Sample population type and number are given below in tabular form.**

S.N.	Participants	Type	Number of participants	Used tools
1	Teachers	Head/teacher	4 (2ht and 2ft)	Interview observation
2	Students	Girls	12	
3	Parents	Father and mother	4	

All participants two head teachers, two female teachers, twelve girls and as well as our parents were selected based on purposive sampling.

**Study Area**

This study was conducted in Kirtipur Municipal City, 5 and 7- an area which lies in the southern part of Kathmandu district. Therefore, the majority of Maharjan people live

there. In the following discussion and analysis based on field data which is directly related to participants' experience gender mainstreaming is schools.

### Limitations of the Study

In this study, some limitations are mentioned. Primarily, this study was carried out in the Kathmandu district of Kritipur Municipality, Word No 5 and 7. All participants (school head teachers, female teachers parents) were taken from the hilly part but not from other parts of Nepal. Subsequently, the result of this study might not be generalized among the entire schooling population of girls in Nepal. Thus, the result of the study might be different based on the participants 'perceptions.

### Results and Discussion

This section started with findings and discussions of the study data are related to the selected population about their experience

### Gender Issues in Textbooks

The study objectives are based on gender mainstreaming in schools, classrooms and textbooks. Previous studies indicate that numerous studies on girls have been done, including gender mainstreaming. However, gender mainstreaming remains an aspiration of all of us till now to be achieved and two subheadings are analyzed based on informants' perceptions.

Regarding gender relations, there are several discriminatory laws against women, particularly those related to property rights, nationality and citizenship, reproductive health, marriage and family, Pandey, Mishra and Chemjong (2006). As per our objectives of research, we have got a positive picture of gender mainstreaming from the secondary level courses of class ten's Social Studies and English. Some of them are included here.

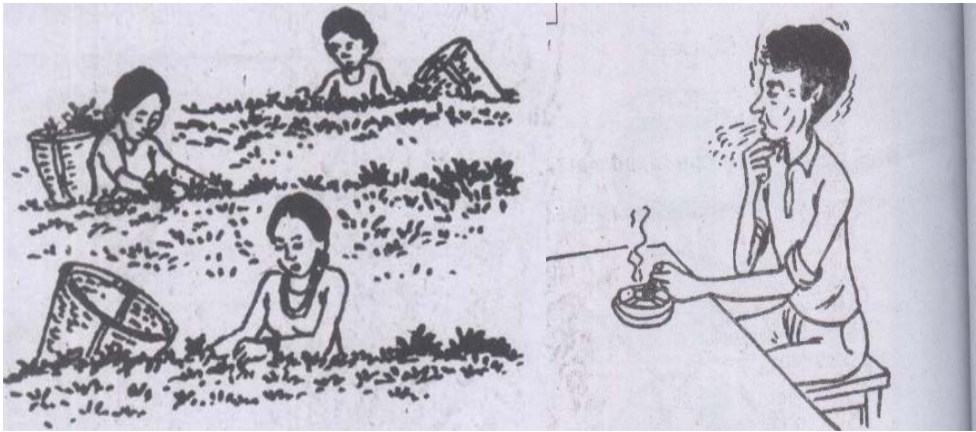


Subject: Social Studies, Class: Ten, Page: 17

Both of these pictures are taken from the Social Studies of class ten, page no. 17. The division of labour based on gender is shown in this picture. Regarding this, feminist

emphasizes understanding of gender inequality. Thus, the female is carrying grass in the basket but the male is with the computer. In this regard, Koirala (2003) says that girls have low involvement in education. According to this picture, women are given the jobs of manual labour like working in fields and jungle but men are given jobs with modern technology and knowledge. The picture shows discrimination in the division of labour based on gender. When we took the reaction of the students in regards to this picture they said that male is presented as skilled and female as unskilled. Such a picture can be unhelpful in getting gender mainstreaming. All agree on the fact that such images can stereotype males and females based on profession.

The following image is being taken from the English subject of Class 10, page no. 116 and 118.



Subject: English, Class: Ten, Pages: 116 and 118

In the first picture, we can see that one male is smoking. In the second image, women are shown plucking tea. The first picture shows that males are going to the wrong way of having drugs. The second image shows that women are productive and they are working. These pictures even show that the tendency to have drugs is higher in males than females. Another perspective can be taken to analyze these images. One can say that male is only free to go shopping and enjoy but female is bound to do work. We had discussed with students and teachers about these two pictures. They said that these images are representatives of society where males and females have different roles to play. Social norms and customs determine the role of girls/women and boys/men (UNESCO, 2005). However, they have consent on the fact that anyone, male or female, can after drugs, so, all need to be careful about it.

The following picture has been taken from the Social Studies of class ten, page no. 114 .



Subject : Social Studies, Class : Ten, Page : 114

This picture shows there is no participation of women in political changes in Nepal. If we suppose this picture as truth, there is no contribution of women in the political movements of Nepal. We make the slogans like 'male and female are two wheels of same cart' but in reality it does not appear. Where are the women in the picture above? It is obvious that many women had contributed in the political changes of Nepal but this picture hides this fact. When we were discussing on this picture one female teacher expressed her sadness. She said, "Nepal's president is female, Nepal's speaker is female. They must have contributed in the political changes of country. So question is, "but why our texts are hesitating to recognize the contribution women?" We all are agreed that this picture is failing to grasp the need of time. Such pictures have to recognize the contribution of women in the political change of country.

According to one female teacher, "there are female president and speaker in this country but there is no picture of women in the movement in the text book.

**Gender Issues in Schools and Class**

Gender is a term that refers to the parallel and socially unequal division into femininity and masculinity (Luitel, 2008). However, in the study area, gender discrimination has happened knowingly or unknowingly. In this relation (Bista, 2006) particularly in schools, gender discrimination has been seen as soft and stereotyped. For instance, girls and boys have separate seating arrangements and they mostly play in different groups. These given activities clarify that gender concept was already shaped in their mind. Gender gaps were reflected in school attendance, achievement and pass percentage. For example, girls

attended school less than boys (Bist, 2004). Whatever, they perceive these activities as their responsibilities as a different sex. Though teachers in the study area are not trained in gender mainstreaming they were found positive on gender mainstreaming. They are trying hard to minimize gender discrimination in class.

In the context of sports, we have talked about interviews. One girl said that she wanted to play football. He goes to play it but there are always boys in the playground. They make fun of the female and football. They do not allow her to play. She expressed her dissatisfaction deeply, and said, "I like to play football but boys do not allow me to play football."

Is she failing to play football because she is a girl? Is not it discrimination inside the school? There will be equal access for boys and girls in everything but there is not in sports. Schools should stop such discriminatory activities. Boys and girls should get equal opportunities to play then only we can achieve our aspiration of gender mainstreaming. One female teacher also shared her experience. According to her if a good example is needed, the names of Ram and Shyam are only picked. Even there is no tradition to take the names of Sita and Gita as good examples. Sanjel (2001) states that sociocultural factors are equally responsible for creating gender bias in education. She concludes, "Therefore still we have stereotypical discrimination based on gender." She advised on the fact that to improve such discrimination there should be a clear mention of gender discrimination. But people do not know, that making girls or women educated means educating the family and community (CERID, 2004).

### **Conclusion**

Students learn many things in their lives. Their learning does not end in the school but is consciously or unconsciously implemented in the day-to-day life. That makes sense when we talk about gender mainstreaming in the school. The following conclusion has been drawn based on above mentioned analysis interpretation of data and findings of the study.

1. Secondary-level textbooks do not have gender-based bias which becomes possible with the collective endeavour of experts.
2. There is awareness about gender mainstreaming but no program is held because gender-based stereotyping is going on.
3. Some of the pictures which are included in the course help for gender mainstreaming but some promote gender-based stereotypical images.
4. The very term 'gender' is understood by different people differently. For example, when we talked about gender with the Head Teacher, he said that there is no 'gender discrimination.'
5. There should be availability of sports instruments to play according to the wishes of boys and girls.
6. There is a sense of difference in our society. That might be the reason to arrange seats for boys and girls in the classrooms separately.

7. There is impressive progress in understanding gender and gender-based discrimination. That is helping greatly for gender mainstreaming.

### **Recommendation**

Based on the findings and conclusion of the study, the following recommendations have been drawn for further improvement.

1. Specially, some pictures of social studies textbooks at secondary levels required to be revised depending on the gender idea.
2. These pictures given in the text mostly represent gender role stereotyping. Thus, it is essential to revise the picture from the gender role perspective.
3. Some of the pictures given in the textbooks of social studies have been constructed from male-dominated mindsets.
4. An equal emphasis needs to be given in the example books in all grades on gender equality.
5. Examples are to be included in the textbooks about the schools where gender mainstreaming is strong and doing well. That will help students to understand about gender mainstreaming in real life.

### **Future Implication**

Nepal has a diverse background in language, culture, caste and geography, therefore, a single piece of research is not enough to make gender mainstreaming concept. So it is inevitable to further research on these gender mainstream issues or research covering big sample sizes and remote areas of Terai and mountains where still gender bias is strongly prevails.

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