

Gender Sensitization Training in Teacher Education Curricula

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.63345/ijre.v14.i12.3>

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ABSTRACT— Gender sensitization is an essential component of quality teacher education, equipping future educators with the awareness, attitudes, and skills needed to foster gender-equitable classrooms. This manuscript examines the integration of gender sensitization training within teacher education curricula, focusing on its theoretical underpinnings, global and national policy frameworks, and empirical outcomes. A descriptive survey was conducted among 200 student-teachers enrolled in five teacher training institutes across India to assess their pre-existing gender attitudes, the extent and quality of training received, and the perceived efficacy of different instructional approaches.

Data were collected via a structured questionnaire (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.87$) and analysed using descriptive statistics and thematic analysis of open-ended responses. Results indicate that while most institutions include standalone workshops on gender issues, systematic infusion of gender perspectives into core methods courses remains limited. Student-teachers reported significant gains in knowledge and self-efficacy following participatory activities (role-plays, case discussions), but identified barriers such as faculty preparedness and rigid curricular structures. Based on these findings, the paper recommends a three-pronged curricular model—foundational theory modules, embedded gender themes in pedagogy courses, and ongoing reflective practice—to achieve sustained gender sensitization. The manuscript concludes with implications for policy, teacher-educator

training, and future research avenues to strengthen gender equity in education.

KEYWORDS— Gender Sensitization; Teacher Education; Curriculum Integration; Survey Research; Gender Equity

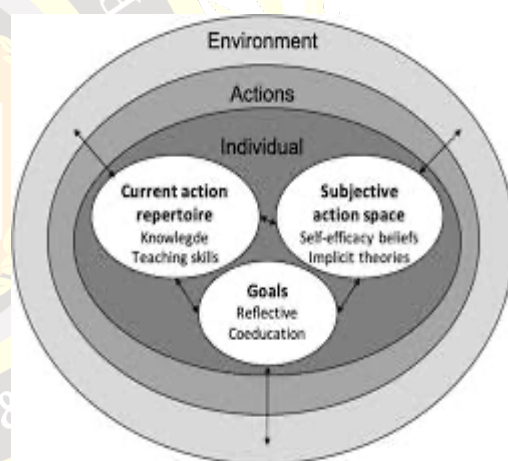


Fig.1 Teacher Education Curricula, [Source\(\[1\]\)](#)

INTRODUCTION

The role of teachers in shaping learners' social attitudes cannot be overstated. As primary agents of socialization, teachers influence how pupils perceive and enact gender roles in classrooms and beyond. Yet, deep-seated gender stereotypes often persist unchallenged in educational contexts, leading to unequal participation, biased expectations, and differential learning outcomes for girls and boys (UNESCO, 2015). Teacher education, therefore, has a critical responsibility: to prepare prospective teachers not only in subject matter and pedagogy but also in recognizing and counteracting gender bias.

Despite widespread policy mandates—from the National Curriculum Framework for Teacher Education (NCFTE, 2009) in India to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG 4.7)—there is limited consensus on how best to embed gender sensitization within the teacher training curriculum. Some programmes offer isolated workshops or seminars, while others integrate gender themes across methods courses. However, empirical evidence on the comparative effectiveness of these approaches remains scant. Moreover, variations in institutional capacity, faculty competence, and regional socio-cultural norms complicate curriculum design and implementation.

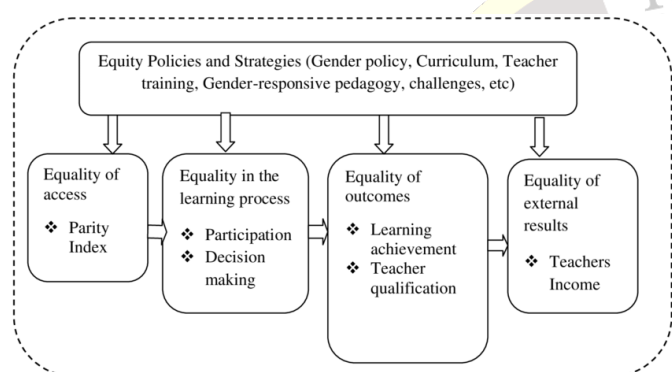


Fig.2 Gender Sensitization Training in Teacher Education, [Source\(\[2\]\)](#)

This study responds to these challenges by investigating three interrelated questions:

1. What is the current status of gender sensitization training across key teacher education programmes?
2. How do student-teachers perceive the adequacy and impact of different training modalities?
3. What curricular strategies can best promote sustained gender sensitivity among future educators?

Drawing on social constructivist theory—which posits that learning emerges through active engagement with social contexts—this paper underscores the need for participatory, critical pedagogies that encourage reflection on gender norms (Vygotsky, 1978; Freire, 1970). By combining quantitative survey data with qualitative insights, it offers evidence-based recommendations for curriculum enhancement.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Foundations

Feminist pedagogical scholarship highlights the classroom as a site of power relations, where gendered expectations shape interactions (hooks, 1994). Social constructivists argue that knowledge and identity are co-constructed through discourse and practice (Vygotsky, 1978). Integrating these perspectives, gender sensitization training aims to make implicit biases explicit, enabling student-teachers to critically examine gendered dynamics in teaching and learning.

Global and National Policy Context

International frameworks such as UNESCO's Gender-Responsive Pedagogy guidelines (2019) urge teacher education institutions to adopt gender audits, curriculum reviews, and faculty development in gender analysis. In India, the NCFTE (2009) mandates modules on gender equity, yet studies reveal patchy implementation (Kumar & Sharma, 2017). State education boards vary in their emphasis, with some instituting formal gender audit mechanisms and others treating gender components as optional add-ons.

Empirical Research on Training Models

Comparative studies suggest that one-off workshops, while raising awareness, have limited long-term impact on attitudes and classroom practices (Johnson et al., 2018). In contrast, sustained, integrated approaches—where gender themes are woven into subject-specific pedagogy courses—tend to yield deeper cognitive and affective shifts (Patel & Singh, 2020). Action research projects and reflective journaling have also been identified as powerful tools for fostering critical consciousness (Lee, 2016).

Gaps in the Literature

Most prior surveys have focused either on student attitudes or on content analysis of curricula, rarely linking both. Additionally, research often treats teacher educators as uniform stakeholders, overlooking differences in institutional culture, resource availability, and regional socio-cultural

contexts. This study addresses these gaps by surveying student-teachers across multiple institutions and probing both their experiences of training and their recommendations for curriculum design.

METHODOLOGY

A descriptive survey research design was adopted. Five teacher training institutes—two urban, two semi-urban, and one rural—were purposively selected in northern and southern India to capture diverse contexts. The target population comprised student-teachers in their final year of a two-year Bachelor of Education (B.Ed.) programme.

Sampling and Participants. Using stratified random sampling, 200 student-teachers (40 per institute) were invited to participate; 186 completed the survey (response rate = 93%). The demographic profile included 68% female and 32% male respondents, aged 21–32 ($M = 23.8$ years).

Instrument. A structured questionnaire was developed, comprising four sections:

1. Demographics and prior exposure to gender concepts
2. Perceived adequacy of gender sensitization training (10 items on a 5-point Likert scale)
3. Self-efficacy in identifying and addressing gender bias (8 items, Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.87$)
4. Open-ended questions on strengths, weaknesses, and suggestions for curricular improvement

The instrument underwent expert validation (three teacher educators and one gender studies scholar) and a pilot test with 30 student-teachers, yielding satisfactory reliability and clarity.

Data Collection. Surveys were administered in classroom settings under faculty supervision. Participation was voluntary and anonymous; informed consent was obtained.

Data Analysis. Quantitative responses were analysed using SPSS: descriptive statistics (means, standard deviations) and cross-tabulations by gender and institutional type. Qualitative

responses underwent thematic coding to identify recurring recommendations and perceived challenges.

RESEARCH CONDUCTED AS A SURVEY

The survey unfolded over a two-week period. Initial contact was made through programme coordinators, who facilitated survey administration during regular class hours to maximize response rates. The researcher provided standardized instructions, emphasizing that honest feedback—including criticism—was vital for curriculum enhancement.

Of the 200 questionnaires distributed, 186 valid responses were returned. Data cleaning involved checking for missing values (less than 2% per item), which were handled via mean substitution. Quantitative items were scored such that higher values indicated stronger agreement or greater self-efficacy.

Open-ended responses ($n = 162$) were transcribed and coded by two independent raters, achieving an inter-rater reliability of $\kappa = 0.82$. Themes were organized into categories: content depth, pedagogical approaches, faculty preparedness, institutional support, and assessment strategies.

RESULTS

Awareness and Attitudes

Prior to formal training, only 23% of participants reported moderate to high awareness of gender equity principles, with no significant difference by gender ($p > .05$). Post-training, mean perceived adequacy scores rose from $M = 2.1$ ($SD = 0.9$) to $M = 3.8$ ($SD = 0.7$) on the 5-point scale, indicating substantial gains.

Self-Efficacy

Self-efficacy in identifying gender bias increased significantly ($t(185) = 14.32, p < .001$), with female participants reporting slightly higher gains than males ($\Delta M = 0.3, p = .04$).

Comparative Effectiveness of Training Modalities

Participants rated various pedagogical strategies on perceived impact (1 = least effective; 5 = most effective):

- Role-plays and simulations: $M = 4.2$ ($SD = 0.6$)
- Case-based discussions: $M = 4.0$ ($SD = 0.7$)
- Lecture-based modules: $M = 2.8$ ($SD = 1.0$)
- Reflective journaling: $M = 3.9$ ($SD = 0.8$)

Thematic Insights

From open-ended responses, five key themes emerged:

1. **Content Integration:** “Gender topics should not be confined to one course; they must be woven into all teaching methods modules.”
2. **Faculty Training:** “Many teacher educators lack the confidence to facilitate sensitive discussions on gender.”
3. **Institutional Commitment:** “Support from leadership—through gender cells and resource allocation—is crucial.”
4. **Assessment and Feedback:** “Assignments should evaluate not only content knowledge but also reflective practice on gender issues.”
5. **Community Engagement:** “Linking training to local community contexts makes gender discussion more relevant.”

No significant differences were found between urban and rural institutions in overall adequacy scores ($p = .12$), though rural respondents emphasized the need for contextually relevant examples more strongly.

CONCLUSION

This study highlights both progress and persisting gaps in integrating gender sensitization within teacher education curricula. While standalone workshops and modules have raised baseline awareness and self-efficacy among student-teachers, the absence of a cohesive, institution-wide

strategy limits long-term impact. Participatory pedagogies—role-plays, case discussions, reflective journaling—emerge as particularly effective, yet their adoption is uneven, impeded by faculty preparedness and curricular rigidity.

To address these challenges, we propose a three-pronged curricular model:

1. **Foundational Theory Modules:** Early in the programme, students engage with feminist and social-constructivist frameworks to understand gender as a socially constructed phenomenon.
2. **Embedded Gender Themes:** Across subject-specific pedagogy courses, gender perspectives are integrated—for example, analyzing textbook content in language methods or gendered participation in science labs.
3. **Ongoing Reflective Practice:** Through action research projects and reflective journals, student-teachers critically examine their evolving beliefs and classroom observations.

Furthermore, capacity building for teacher educators is indispensable. Institutes should conduct regular faculty development workshops and establish gender resource centres to support continuous learning. Assessment strategies must also evolve to evaluate both cognitive understanding and attitudinal transformation. Finally, engaging local communities and stakeholders can ground abstract gender concepts in lived realities, enhancing relevance and sustainability.

Limitations of this study include its focus on B.Ed. programmes in only two states, which may limit generalizability. Future research could adopt longitudinal designs to track attitude and practice changes as student-teachers enter in-service roles. Comparative studies across different national contexts would also enrich understanding of culturally specific enablers and barriers.

In sum, transforming teacher education curricula through systematic gender sensitization is vital for achieving broader goals of equity and social justice in education. By adopting integrated, participatory, and reflective strategies, teacher training institutions can play a pivotal role in dismantling entrenched gender biases and nurturing inclusive classrooms for all learners.

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