

Gender-Transformative Education: A Pathway to Nourishing and Evolving Gender Equality in the Higher Education of Iran

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Abstract : Gender-transformative (G-TE) education is a challenging concept in the field of education and it is a matter of hot debate in the contemporary world. Paulo Freire as the prominent advocate of transformative education considers it as an alternative to conventional banking model of education. Besides, a more inclusive concept has been introduced, namely, G-TE, as an unbiased education fostering an environment of gender justice. As its main tenet, G-TE eliminates obstacles to education and improves social shifts. A plethora of contemporary research indicates that G-TE could completely revolutionize education systems by displacing inequalities and changing gender stereotypes. Despite significant progress in female education and its effects on gender equality in Iran, challenges persist. There are some deficiencies regarding gender disparities in the society and, education, specifically. As an example, the number of women with university degrees is on the rise; thus, there will be an increasing demand for employment in the society by them. Instead, many job opportunities remain occupied by men and it is seen as intolerable for the society to assign such occupations to women. In fact, Iran is regarded as a patriarchal society where educational contexts can play a critical role to assign gender ideology to its learners. Thus, such gender ideologies in the education can become the prevailing ideologies in the entire society. Therefore, improving education in this regard, can lead to a significant change in a society subsequently influencing the status of women not only within their own country but also on a global scale. Notably, higher education plays a vital role in this empowerment and social change. Particularly higher education can have a crucial part in imparting gender neutral ideologies to its learners and bringing about substantial change. It has the potential to alleviate the detrimental effects of gender inequalities. Therefore, this study aims to conceptualize the pivotal role of G-TE and its potential power in developing gender equality within the higher educational system of Iran presented within a theoretical framework. The study emphasizes the necessity of establishing a theoretical grounding for citizenship, and transformative education while distinguishing gender related issues including gender equality, equity and parity. This theoretical foundation will shed lights on the decisions made by policy-makers, syllabus designers, material developers, and specifically professors and students. By doing so, they will be able to promote and implement gender equality recognizing the determinants, obstacles, and consequences of sustaining gender-transformative approaches in their classes within the Iranian higher education system. The expected outcomes include the eradication of gender inequality, transformation of gender stereotypes and provision of equal opportunities for both males and females in education.

Keywords : citizenship education, gender inequality, higher education, patriarchal society, transformative education

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