

Understanding Gender Role Behaviors: Single Sex vs. Mixed Sex Schools

Ven. K. Wimaladhamma

ABSTRACT

Sri Lanka, as an Asian country gives a very important place to gender roles. Understanding roles of one's own gender and opposite gender is very important as it helps people to learn the way to live in society because gender is basically a social construct. Through socialization, children learn gender role behaviors from a very early age from various sources and school can be considered one of the most important sources through which children learn gender role behaviors. Understanding gender role behaviors may be different according to the type of the school (single sex or mixed sex) because the environment and the socialization process of single sex schools and mixed sex schools differ. Gender is embedded in social institutions. The concept, "gender institution" means that the entire institution is patterned by gender. Gendered institutions illustrate the total pattern of gender relations which includes stereotypical expectations, interpersonal relationships, the division of labor along the lines of gender, the images and symbols that support these divisions and the different placement of men and women in social, economic and political hierarchies of institutions. Thus, when considering these facts, Sri Lankan schools belong to gendered institutions because they have embedded specific gender patterns inside schools. The environment background and the socialization process of both single and mixed sex schools convey different gender role behaviors for both boys and girls. Here, in this study, the researcher would like to point out how the socialization process of single sex and mixed sex schools influences the students to understand gender role behaviors. The study will basically focus on how the teacher expectations, classroom interaction, the content of the curriculum and the representation of men and women as teachers and school leaders, the school text books, characters in school text books, the importance of time the students spend in the school etc. are related to understanding different gender role behaviors for both girls and boys and how they ultimately convey and generate gender stereotypes, gender biases, and gender discrimination.

Keywords-Gender Role Behaviors, Socialization Process, Single Sex Schools, Mixed Sex Schools

Department of Buddhist Studies, Sri Lanka International Buddhist Academy (SIBA), Sri Lanka