Toward Bias-Free Teaching:  
Gender Equity in the Classroom  
Rodney H. Clarken  
Northern Michigan University  
Paper presented at the  
United Nations Non-Governmental Forum on Women  
Beijing, Aug. 31-Sep. 8, 1995.  

Abstract  

This paper discusses the inequities and injustices toward women and advocates remedies through education. Practical suggestions based upon expectations theory and the Teacher Expectations and Student Achievement (TESA) program give teachers ways they can reduce discrimination and improve achievement, especially for those denied an equal opportunity to learn. The following fifteen teacher behaviors are briefly addressed: equitable distribution of response opportunities, individual helping, latency, delving, high level questioning, affirming/correcting, praising, reasons for praise, listening, accepting feelings, proximity, courtesy, positive personal interest, touching, and desisting.

The very term "history" represents a bias against women. Societies, women have been regarded as subhuman, on the same level as the livestock or possessions that belonged to the man. Even the term for languages was the same as for possessions or animals. Not only have they been considered as inferior, it has been commonly accepted that women were harmed by education. Women have been suppressed with these conceptions throughout "history." They have not been allowed adequate opportunities for development, or accorded human dignity and human rights. The vestiges of these injustices against half of humanity are apparent today. This paper explores ways teachers can help eliminate the biases and injustices that are so prevalent throughout the educational institution: particular attention to gender discrimination in teacher-student interactions in the classroom.

150 years have seen a movement in religion, science and human affairs to remedy this longstanding prejudice against women. It is now generally accepted that although women differ in some aspects from men, these differences in no way imply inferiority. It is obvious and accepted that the physical differences between women and men form a necessary complement to each other, as in procreation.

The mental, intuitive, and spiritual qualities of women are becoming more important and valued. This change is resulting in a fairer and more healthy balance between women and men. Male and female hands and wings of the social body of humanity.

I has dominated over the other with its more forceful and aggressive qualities, but these qualities are losing their past dominance. The mental, intuitional qualities of women are becoming more important and valued. This change is resulting in a fairer and more healthy balance between women much more needs to be done before gender equity is a reality, not merely an ideal. We are just entering the stage of realizing its necessity and do something about it. As we progress, the principles and ideals of equal rights for all people will become more accepted and steps taken to apply them.

Solution  

This paper focuses on the actions teachers can take to make their classrooms more equitable, especially for women. It gives practical suggestions based upon expectation theory for teaching in ways that reduce discrimination in classrooms. Much documentation of the inequities and injustices in education exists to establish the need for change. A wealth of resources can be referred to for more information on these topics, such as those published by Gilligan, Sadker and Sadker and organizations like the American Association of University Women (AAUW). Although this paper focuses on gender equity, these same principles can be applied to remedy other forms of discrimination that occur in classrooms throughout the world.

The process of changing behavior involves knowledge, volition and action. Teachers play a vitally important role in this process as they directly influence the students. If they know how to teach equitably, care about justice in their classrooms, and teach in the right way, they can affect their students and classrooms. On the other hand, if they are not equitable, they can also cause great harm. Teachers have a great role and responsibility. To teach well requires much knowledge and effort. Schools and classrooms need to be well organized around sound principles, and the teach
opportunities, rights and curriculum for both men and women of all ages are needed to establish equity in the classroom. Women should even have men in receiving education as they are the first educators of the next generation and therefore can have the greatest potential for improving education and society's conditions. Another reason for affording women greater preference in education is to address the imbalance of women's presence in the world, which is sorely needed at this stage in civilization.

**Teacher Expectations and Student Achievement**

Expectations about a student affect how they interact with that student, which in turn affects the student's achievement. Expectations are expressed through actions in turn reflect expectations. Expectations about and actions toward others influence their growth and development. Expectation theory, researched by psychologists, and is well established. That beliefs about others influence their behaviors is sometimes referred to as the Pygmalion effect, the literary example of the same principle. If people are treated in a certain way, they will change their behavior to meet others' expectations, which has also been expressed by many philosophers throughout the ages.

Expectations about and actions toward others influence their growth and development. Expectation theory, researched by psychologists, and is well established. That beliefs about others influence their behaviors is sometimes referred to as the Pygmalion effect, the literary example of the same principle. If people are treated in a certain way, they will change their behavior to meet others' expectations, which has also been expressed by many philosophers throughout the ages.

Teachers often unconsciously and unknowingly carry the belief passed down throughout history that women are inferior. The Teacher Expectations and Achievement (TESA) program is an effective way to help teachers interact equitably with all students, which in turn results in increased achievement. Teachers were previously deprived of these quality interactions. The initial research on TESA was conducted in the Los Angeles schools (see articles). Most of the follow-up research has been conducted in the United States, where this program has gained much attention over the last two decades, but the findings appear to be relevant to educators throughout the world.

The research on which TESA is based identified the differences in teachers' behaviors toward perceived high achieving students and perceived low achieving students. Teachers identified those students in their classes for whom they had high or low expectations. Which students will do the best and accomplish the most? Which students are not very capable and will not achieve much? Bias in teachers' perceptions of female students affect the quality and quantity of their interactions with them, which affects the female students' learning opportunities and recommended relating to all students as high-achieving students. Teachers can monitor or have others monitor how they are doing with each area. This monitoring can involve a simple tallying of the number of times a teacher does a certain thing and with whom, as well as their teaching and analyzed how they treated these two groups, their expectations toward each group affected their behaviors toward them. Teachers can conduct similar research in their own classroom.

**Equitable Distribution of Response Opportunities** Equitable distribution of response opportunities is the most basic and most obvious of the ways in which teachers can equalize response opportunities by devising systems that involve all students in answering questions and discussions. Simple ways of doing so include random systems of calling on students such as picking names out of a hat or following different patterns based on students' names or seating arrangements. Response opportunities are uniformly distributed throughout the class. Teachers often ask for volunteers and call on the students who volunteer.
Praise of learning performance or positively reinforcing a student's performance is the second unit of feedback. The positive reinforcement of praise and reinforcement is one of the most documented findings in psychology and is the foundation of behaviorism and conditioning. People are conditioned to do what they are reinforced to do. Praise and encouragement have been cited by many successful people as important influences. Teachers' praise must be spread to all students, not just the most favored. Find something good to praise in each student, and do not miss opportunities to encourage high achievement. According to the principles of behaviorism, praise or other positive reinforcers, to be most effective, should be properly distributed, with progressively longer variable intervals being generally suggested.
The condition of women throughout recorded history has been deplorable. Women were kept subjugated through lack of education.

Teachers can help students have higher expectations for themselves by asking students in a calm, courteous and respectful way.

Negative stimuli and behaviors should be stopped and prevented in the future. Some form of punishment is necessary, although behavioral scientists have shown that reinforcement theory: introduce positive stimuli or remove positive stimuli or introduce negative stimuli to discourage undesirable behavior.

Teachers can help all students develop healthy behaviors by avoiding abusive treatment and stopping negative behavior through methods based on reinforcement theory: introduce positive stimuli or remove positive stimuli or introduce negative stimuli to discourage undesirable behavior. Teachers can help all students develop healthy behaviors by avoiding abusive treatment and stopping negative behavior through methods based on reinforcement theory: introduce positive stimuli or remove positive stimuli or introduce negative stimuli to discourage undesirable behavior.

Teachers are generally more accepting of the feelings of students, which conveys higher personal regard. This behavior encourages desirable behaviors and removes positive stimuli or introduces negative stimuli to discourage undesirable behavior. Teachers can help all students develop healthy behaviors by asking students in a calm, courteous and respectful way.

Desisting is how teachers stop behavior that is not acceptable. Teachers correct high achieving students differently from those students who are not. Students sense this difference and often respond accordingly. If undesirable behavior is manifested by the students, that behavior should be stopped and prevented in the future. Some form of punishment is necessary, although behavioral scientists have shown that reinforcement theory: introduce positive stimuli or remove positive stimuli or introduce negative stimuli to discourages undesirable behavior. Teachers can help all students develop healthy behaviors by avoiding abusive treatment and stopping negative behavior through methods based on reinforcement theory: introduce positive stimuli or remove positive stimuli or introduce negative stimuli to discourages undesirable behavior. Teachers can help all students develop healthy behaviors by asking students in a calm, courteous and respectful way to stop misbehavior that implies the need was not expected from them.

Generally show greater personal regard to those they feel are more capable. Students who receive more care and respect are encouraged to achieve higher levels of achievement by developing the above characteristics of personal regard.

Conclusion

A general rise in educational standards and opportunities for women throughout recorded history has been deplorable. Women were kept subjugated through lack of education and opportunity. Women...
nprove their condition were subjected to abuse. It was considered a handicap if a woman was educated. Given equal education and opportunity, men in capacity and contributions.

will the education of women remedy a great inequity and injustice in human rights, but it will also have a tremendous influence on improving the welfare of all people. The recipients of their improved education will be all of the society. Most importantly they will positively influence the early lives of children. This influence alone will bring incalculable benefits that will be felt for generations to come. Because of their feminine qualities, they will surpass men in many fields of endeavor when they are accorded equal rights.

can move toward bias-free teaching and gender equity in the classroom. Teachers have a practical and measurable way to assess their treatment and to monitor their progress toward equitable educational opportunities for their students through the teacher behaviors identified in TESA. Wisdom and effort will be required to apply these principles, but the benefits in terms of the increased development of the wealth of human potential neglected because half of the world has been denied equal education and opportunity is unimaginable. The light of equity and justice shining from the classrooms can illuminate the whole earth.