Introduction to Gender-Responsive Teaching Methods

What Are Gender-Responsive Teaching Methods?

- Teaching methods and learning materials that take into account the specific learning needs of female and male students.[1]

- Concerned with what is taught, how teaching takes place, and how what is taught is learned, in the context of female and male students.

- Synonymous with gender-responsive pedagogy.

Key Teaching Skills

- Key skills demonstrated by teachers who promote a gender-responsive classroom environment include:
    - Valuing equally the learning ability of both female and male students
    - Facilitating both female and male students' abilities to learn, progress equally, and develop their potential to the fullest
    - Reacting cautiously to unfriendly and potentially gender-biased attitudes that students may demonstrate toward their female and male peers
    - Helping students question gender-biased attitudes in order to prevent them from happening in the future
    - Looking for characteristics/behaviors resulting from social norms that may hinder academic learning and performance (e.g., shyness, arrogance, dominance, bullying, lack of confidence, and fear of speaking out in class)

Classroom Setup

- A gender-responsive classroom setup may involve:
    - A mixed seating arrangement to enhance the equal participation of women and men—and particularly to encourage women to speak out and overcome shyness.
    - A seating arrangement allowing all students to be positioned at the same level

Learning and Teaching Materials

- Standard teaching methods and learning materials tend to:[1]
  - depict men as powerful, assertive, and intelligent
  - depict men in leadership and professional roles (e.g., doctors)
  - portray women as weak, passive, and submissive
  - depict women in domestic, care-giving, and supportive roles (e.g., nurses)
- Gender-responsive teaching methods are free of and/or challenge gender stereotypes

Learning and Teaching Materials, cont.

- Some questions to consider when assessing and/or designing teaching and learning materials:
  - How many women and men are portrayed or mentioned in the text and images?
  - When and how often do female characters appear compared with male characters?
  - What kind of activity (productive/reproductive/community) is each person involved in?
  - How are women and men portrayed? (e.g., nurturers, economic producers, leaders, victims)
  - Do the materials use gender-neutral/inclusive language? (i.e., "people" or "persons" vs. "men" and "women")

Learning and Teaching Materials, cont.

- Are both pronouns used (she/he)?
- Who are the main characters in the stories/case studies?
- Is there an equal representation of both women and men in the images/illustrations?
- How do women appear in comparison with men, especially in terms of their image sizes?
- How do the teaching/learning materials promote equal partnership between women and men?

Classroom Dynamics and Interaction

- Strategies for promoting gender sensitivity during classroom interactions may include:
    - Giving equal chances to both female and male students to answer questions
    - Extending positive reinforcement to both women and men
    - Allowing sufficient time for students to answer questions—especially female students who may be shy or afraid to express themselves
    - Assigning exercises that encourage students—especially women—to speak out
    - Ensuring that working groups are mixed (both women and men)
    - Ensuring that everyone has the opportunity to lead discussions

Classroom Dynamics and Interaction, cont.

- Ensuring that group leaders are both women and men
- Encouraging both women and men to present results from group work
- Ensuring both women and men serve as note takers in small group work
- Phrasing questions to reflect equal gender representation—using female and male names and characters when providing examples/illustrations
- Ensuring each student has equal opportunities to practice on the demonstration models without being made to feel uncomfortable and without being belittled by others

Classroom Dynamics and Interaction, cont.

- Ensuring no students dominate over others
- Calling on or addressing both female and male students a balanced number of times and for all subjects[2]
- Giving both female and male students an equal opportunity to write on the writing board a balanced number of times on all subjects[2]
- Assigning similar duties to both female and male students (for example, cleaning, moving furniture)[2]
- Supporting and encouraging both female and male learners to be class leaders, possibly having one female and one male as co-leaders[2]
- Discouraging and punishing gender-discriminatory and sexist behaviors
- All acts of sexual harassment and assault must be punished
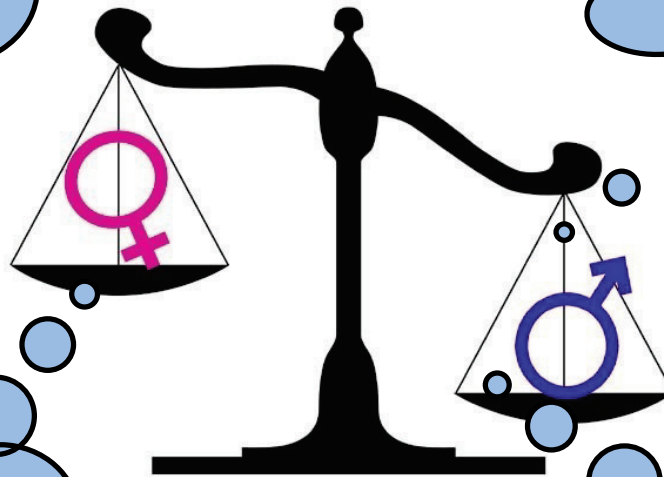
Teacher Biases
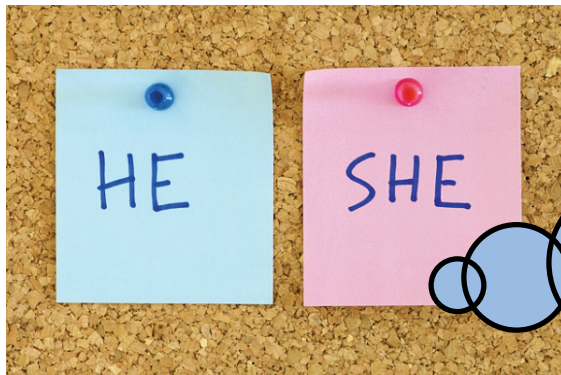
The **gender biases** of teachers are often expressed through language that reveals their personal beliefs/attitudes regarding women and men and the social norms related to women's and men's roles and responsibilities.

Teacher Biases, cont.

When a female student is assertive, she is told to stop behaving like a man.

"Women are not as good at science as men."

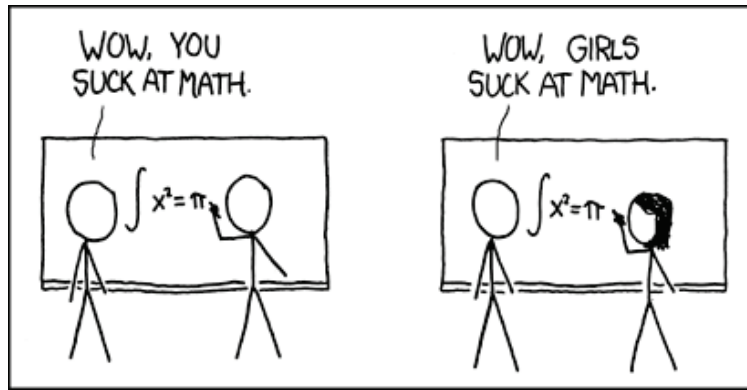"Women make better midwives than doctors because they are naturally nurturing."

"Men are better doctors than women because they're more rational and they are natural leaders."

Teacher Biases, cont.

- Language use:[1]
  - Gender biases can be expressed verbally and can reinforce gender differences and inequalities
  - In the classroom, teachers and students often use language that emphasizes men's superiority over women, which can negatively impact on student performance
  - Teachers can enhance students' performance by using gender-equitable language in the classroom
  - Teachers need to remain aware of the language they use, to ensure that it is gender-responsive!!

Teacher Biases, cont.

Source: Munroe R. 2008. How it works. xkcd.com.
https://xkcd.com/385/. Published February 18. Accessed June 27, 2018.

Eliminate your own use of gender-insulting language, ban its use by your students, and speak up when fellow teachers and other adults speak this way.[1]

References

1. Mlama P, Dioum M, Makoye H, Murage L, Wagah M, Washika R. 2005. Gender Responsive Pedagogy: A Teacher's Handbook. Nairobi, Kenya: Forum for African Women Educationalists. http://www.ungei.org/files/FAWE_GRP_ENGLISH_VERSION.pdf. Accessed June 25, 2018.

2. United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) Bangkok. 2009. Gender in Education Network in Asia-Pacific (GENIA) Toolkit: Promoting Gender Equality in Education. Bangkok, Thailand: UNESCO Bangkok. http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0018/001864/186495E.pdf. Accessed June 27, 2018.

For more information, please visit
www.mcsprogram.org

facebook.com/MCSPglobal   twitter.com/MCSPglobal