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Education as a catalyst of Empowerment, Positive Change and Social Justice

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Abstract

Aim: Education aims not only for providing knowledge and literacy, it also helps one grow and develop personally, socially, politically and economically. It provides with cognitive skills, decision making capabilities, creativity and enhances awareness of self as well as others. This makes an individual strong at psychological level too. Thus, it empowers a person with reasoning and judgement to live a fulfilling life which consequently reinforces an individual to bring positive change in society. Absence of quality education often leads to development of prejudices. The prejudiced attitude is often based on incomplete or inaccurate information detrimental for the growth of an individual. However, this can be transformed into well informed and fair perception through quality education. Positive social change often require grass root reforms, awareness programs, challenging the existing majority, dismantling oppressive structures and promoting social justice.

Objective: Research designed to find out the prevalence of need of Educative awareness and counselling orientation programs and its effectiveness in cognitive restructuring for the desired mindset change and thus optimizing the prevalence of equal opportunities, fairness and social justice.

Method: A program designed to educate about the learning difficulties prevalent in society, to stimulate students minds with creative methods for simplified learning, to diversify the mindsets of students through cognitive restructuring and becoming smart media users as beneficiaries and ruling out its negative impact. 130 school and college students' responses were recorded.

Key Findings: The result shows low awareness level in turn high demand of educative awareness programs. The students affirmed that knowledge, awareness and creativity sessions empowered them to allocate and utilize the available resources. This includes using and channelizing their own energies and capabilities which were hidden and not understood by them as well as using the available resources outside. Significantly high number of students felt empowered and hopeful for bringing the change in society which otherwise seems impossible to them. Again, a significant number of students felt that education paves the way for equal opportunities, fairness and social justice. This means through education we unlock the potential of underprivileged to promote them as drivers of innovation, productivity and prosperity. Lastly the students were equally divided on media's role in educating people. Those who were in favour says media increased the volume of learning with better illustrations and easy access to knowledge while others feel depressed when unable to manage information explosion and dealing with confused communication which differs from their real life.

Conclusion: The research can be concluded that education act as a catalyst of empowerment . This is possible only when the education managers are ready to perceive the change and accordingly systematize the age old working procedure. If it is than the beneficiaries will be education, teachers, parents and students. By promoting awareness, creativity, cognition and critical thinking among students qualitative education encourages individuals to question age old norms, challenge unfairness and reducing prejudices that often stand in the way of social justice.

Keywords: Empowerment, Awareness, Cognition, Critical Thinking, Unfairness, Reducing prejudices, Social Justice.

Introduction

Education aims not only for providing knowledge and literacy, it also helps one grow and develop personally, socially, politically and economically.

Personal Development includes cognitive intelligence, interpersonal and intra personal skills, discrimination, judgement, leadership and problem solving. These skills are necessary to have self-awareness as well as awareness about others and becoming competent to achieve at personal level.

Social Development develops an individual to have pro social behaviour towards society. Prosocial behaviour is defined as ‘voluntary behaviour intended to benefit another (Eisenberg et al.,2006). This refines person with kind behaviour and compassionate attitude. The person likes to help others without any selfish motive. Also respecting others, obeying the rules and norms comes with acceptance of socially accepted behaviour.

Political Development makes an individual understand the importance of participation in politics. The educated citizen becomes attentive to the political needs and through knowledge has a great impact on selection and implementation on policies for general people. This includes enhancing their will and ability to speak, write on prevalent political issues and formation of positive attitude and beliefs to build the concept of nationhood. It triggers the feeling of being good citizen with rights and duties as integral part of their political system.

Economic Development maximizes the potential skills to promote an individual towards economic growth and social mobility. In other words, education serves as provider of economic worth of a person and then in turn they contribute in raising the economic competitiveness of the country. The more an educated individual is productive, the more productive and prosperous will be the country at larger level. According to the World Bank, increasing the average years of schooling by one year can increase a country’s GDP growth by 0.37%.

So, to sum up education provides an individual with cognitive skills, decision making capabilities, creativity and enhances awareness of self as well as others. This makes an individual strong at psychological level too. Thus, it empowers a person with reasoning and judgement to live a fulfilling life which consequently reinforces an individual to bring positive change in society.

Absence of Quality Education often leads to development of prejudices. The prejudiced attitude is often based on incomplete or inaccurate information detrimental for the growth of an individual. This affects all the three components of attitude i.e cognitive, affective and behavioural.

Cognitive distortions give rise to meaningless generalizations, oversimplifications as well as unnecessary complications. An individual can suffer from generalized anxiety to anxiety disorders. Specific learning disabilities also requires cognitive restructuring. Media prejudices also comes in this category.

Affective component gives negative emotions. It affects an individual’s subjective feelings as well as physiological responses. Negative emotions like sadness, aggression, hatred,

jealousy etc leads to miserable life with reducing self esteem and confidence. Decreased life satisfaction requires life skills for a better and improved emotional life. Psychosomatic disorders are due to physiological imbalances.

Behavioural component is the way we act and react to a situation or an object. Fear, Phobias and Conduct disorders comes in this category.

However **positive social change** often requires grass root reforms, awareness programs, challenging the existing majority, dismantling oppressive structures and promoting social justice.

Objective of the study: Research designed to find out the prevalence of need of Educative awareness and counselling orientation program and its effectiveness in cognitive restructuring for the desired mindset change and thus optimizing the prevalence of equal opportunities, fairness and social justice.

Method: A program designed to educate about the learning difficulties prevalent in society, to stimulate students minds with creative methods for simplified learning, to diversify the mindsets of students through cognitive restructuring and becoming smart media users as beneficiaries and ruling out its negative impact. The following four major criteria were Taken:

Awareness: is educating to identify the areas to understand children better with their needs, hopes, aspirations so that behavioural, emotional and conduct problems can be successfully dealt with.

Creativity: Innovative methods and alternative therapeutic interventions like art, play, music and dance therapy improving communication, focus and attention of students.

Cognition: Introducing life skills with conceptualizing cognitive cycle and cognitive restructuring.

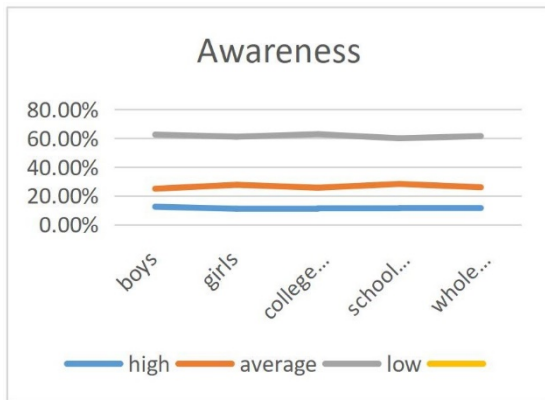
Media's Role: To become smart for using it for beneficiaries, ruling out its negative impact such as its addiction, managing information explosion and prejudiced communication. 130 school and college students' responses were recorded during the programme.

Sample Size:

Sample Category	Boys	Girls	College Students	School Students	Sample as whole
	40	90	70	60	130

Criterion 1: Awareness

Sample Category	Sample Size	Awareness		
		High	Average	Low
Boys	40	5 (12.5%)	10(25%)	25 (62.5%)
Girls	90	10(11.1%)	25(27.7%)	55 (61.1%)
College Students	70	8(11.4%)	18(25.7%)	44(62.8%)
School Students	60	7(11.6%)	17(28.3%)	36(60%)
Sample as whole	130	15(11.5%)	35(26%)	80(61.5%)

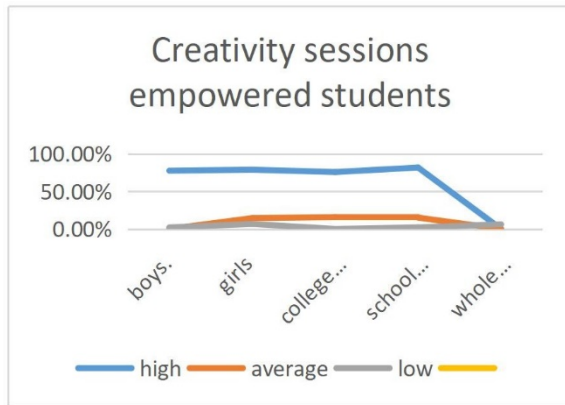


Key Findings: The data above clearly shows the results. There is low awareness level in students about the learning difficulties and available resources and indicates the high demand of educative awareness programs.

Criterion 2: Impact of creativity sessions empowering students.

Sample Category	Sample Size	Creativity (Empowering Students)		
		High	Average	Low
Boys	40	31(77.5%)	7(17.5%)	2(5%)
Girls	90	71(78.8%)	13(14.4%)	6(6.6%)
College Students	70	53(75.7%)	11(15.7%)	6(8.5%)
School Students	60	49(81.6%)	9(15%)	2(3.3%)

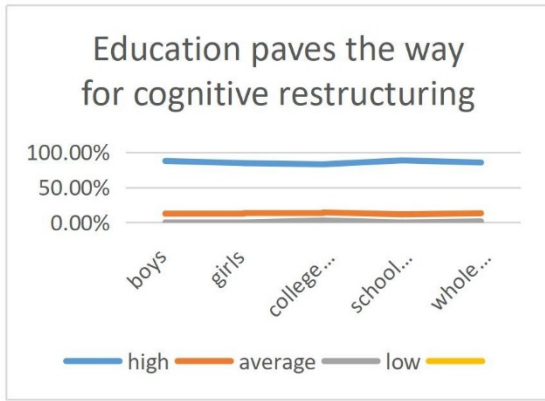
Sample as whole	130	102(78.4%)	20(15.3%)	8(6.1%)
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Key Findings: The students affirmed that knowledge, awareness and creativity sessions empowered them to allocate and utilize the available resources. This includes using and channelizing their own energies and capabilities which were hidden and not understood by them as well as using them outside. Significantly high number of students felt empowered and hopeful for bringing the change in society which otherwise seems impossible to them.

Criterion 3: Education paves the way for social justice

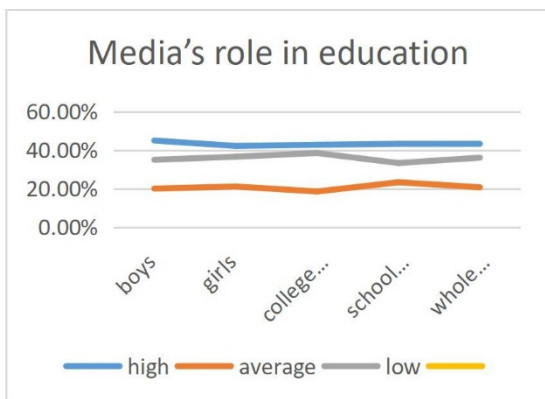
Sample Category	Sample Size	Cognition (Cognitive restructuring)		
		High	Average	Low
Boys	40	35(87.5%)	5(12.5%)	0
Girls	90	76(84.4%)	12(13.3%)	0
College Students	70	58(82.8%)	10(14.2%)	2(2.8%)
School Students	60	53(88.3%)	7(11.6%)	0
Sample as whole	130	111(85.3%)	17(13%)	2(1.5%)



Key Findings: Significant number of students felt that education paves the way for equal opportunities, fairness and social justice. This means through education we unlock the potential of underprivileged to promote them as drivers of innovation, productivity and prosperity.

Criterion 4: Media’s role in educating people

Sample Category	Sample Size	Media’s role		
		High	Average	Low
Boys	40	18(45%)	8(20%)	14(35%)
Girls	90	38(42.2%)	19(21.1%)	33(36.6%)
College Students	70	30(42.8%)	13(18.5%)	27(38.5%)
School Students	60	26(43.3%)	14(23.3%)	20(33.3%)
Sample as whole	130	56(43%)	27(20.7%)	47(36.1%)



Key Findings: Students were almost equally divided on media’s role in educating people.

Some were indifferent too. Those who were in favour says media increased the volume of learning with better illustrations and easy access to knowledge while others feels depressed when unable to manage information explosion and dealing with confused communication which differs from their real life.

Conclusion

The research can be concluded that education act as a catalyst of empowerment. This is possible only when the education managers are ready to perceive the change and accordingly systematize the age old working procedure. If it is than the beneficiaries will be education, teachers, parents and students. By promoting awareness, creativity, cognition and critical thinking among students qualitative education encourages individuals to question age old norms, challenge unfairness and reducing prejudices that often stand in the way of social justice.

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