

Single-Sex Schools Hinder Students' Social Development

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1.0. Introduction

Students should attend mixed gender institutions for them to develop into completely socialized individuals. When children acquire the school going age, parents usually have to make various decisions regarding the school they would prefer their children to attend. Parents would always prefer a school that is well known for producing individuals well fitted for life in the society. Schools are socializing agents and parents would expect that other than their children acquiring the necessary skills for economic reasons, the children should also be well socialized. By the end of the schooling process they should be able to interact well with members of the society. One of the decisions that parents should always consider is whether to take their child to a single- sex instruction school or a mixed –sex instruction school. Much as single sex schools tend to be advantageous in the academic sense, they can impact negatively on an individual's socialization process. When there is need to develop an all round individual then mixed schools would be much preferable. This project proposes an experimental design that can be used to show the impact of single sex schools on socialization process of an individual and consequently show that for development of complete individuals, mixed gender institutions are the ideal educational settings. This project focuses on observation and examination of social behavior and skills in students in single-sex educational set up and those in coeducational settings.

Education should be conceptualized as a holistic process and not just that process that imparts knowledge that will enable one fit well in the economic world. When the social dimension of education is to be considered, it becomes crucial that the factors that affect the socialization process of an individual be considered when selecting a suitable school. In this

regard this project proposes mixed gender instructional settings to single-sex instructional settings.

2.0. Literature review

Some of the earlier studies that are closely related to this research are outlined below. One of the most notable researches into this matter was the one conducted by National Association for Single Sex Public Education (NASSPE) in 2005. In their research, they enrolled similar numbers of fourth grade students into a mixed school and a single sex school. At the end of the year, they administered an exam, and from their results they made a number of observations; they found out that the girls in the single sex schools were more proficient on the administered tests as compared to the girls in the mixed gender set up. Similarly boys in the single sex class set up were also more proficient in comparison to their counterparts in the mixed set up. According to them single sex education is preferable to mixed-se education schools.

The other contribution made into this debate was by Dale who from his researches argued that mixed schools tended to favor academic development of the boys while it suppressed that of girls. Similarly he argued that single sex schools favor the academic achievement of girls (Deem, 69). Some researchers from Columbia University also concurred with this notion that single education boosted academic performance in girls than in men. They argued that students usually have “fear of success”. The only notable difference was that in terms of gender, girls had more fear for success as compared to boys. This can be best understood from the traditional roles and attitudes men have towards the highly educated women in the society. The researchers, argued that the fear of success is however observed to be minimal with girls learning in single sex schools in comparison to those learning in co-educational learning set ups. In 1992, the

Department of Education of United States published a document after various researches that proposed that single sex education bears some advantages with it more so with the girls and young women (Gill, 13). Single sex education was also seen as an effective way of encouraging girls to take on science related subjects that were initially dominated by boys.

Some earlier scholars however differed with the presumption that single sex education should be preferred to mixed sex institutions. Most argued that dividing education along gender lines would fuel the gender-related problems that were more pronounced during those days. Those who were in support of single sex education based their argument on the fact that girls and boys have different intellectual abilities and that due to this they learn differently. Due to the differences, they argued that it was imperative to cater for the needs of the gender groups separately. The proponents of mixed-sex institutional system of education were buoyed by the fact that some doctors explained that the intellectual differences were not conclusive enough to enable educationists split instructional methods along gender lines (Klein, 185).

The illustrations outlined above are just highlights of a few of the studies that have been attempted to support for or against single-sex instructional method in education. One major failures of the earlier researches however is that they concentrated much on the academic performance alone to argue for the need of dividing instructional methods along gender lines. This is misleading since education as a concept entails much more than just academic performance. According to R.S. Peters education is a multidimensional concept that should be viewed in terms of all its components. He proposed that education should also involve the normative dimension as well (Peters, 199). He asserted that education should also involve transmission and acquisition of the desirable societal values and norms that can enable one to

effectively fit in the society. These values include cohesiveness, unity, togetherness and ability to accept individual differences and diversity.

Like the previous studies this paper discusses the need to have mixed-sex instructional institutions, this project also proposes an experiment that will support the need for mixed-sex instructional methods above the single-sex instructional methods. However it differs from the earlier studies in that it proposes an investigation into the effect that the type of school can have on social development of an individual. It does not focus on academic achievement development.

The findings of this research are expected to add to the voice for the need of mixed-gender settings for instructional purposes in place of single-sex instructional methods in the educational institutions. Education as a concept should produce all-round individuals in addition to ensuring academic excellence. In regard to this, the findings of this project will enable people view education in its totality and not just academics.

3.0. Methodology

3.1.1. Participants

This research proposes the use of forty students from three different schools. The forty students should be sampled as follows; ten students should be sampled from a pure girls' school, ten students should also be picked from a pure boys' school. The remaining twenty should be drawn from a mixed sex- school set up. Among the twenty students from the same mixed school, ten should be boys and the other ten should be girls. Important to note is that the learners sampled should be relatively of the same age suitably between fifteen to twenty years old. This is because those in the same age bracket are likely to be in the same level of personality and social development and therefore, observing variations in their social behavior can be easy. Another

important consideration is that the students should be from the same locality. This is ideal because environment in itself is an important socializing agent. Students of the same age in different environmental settings may show great variations in their social development. The experimenter should seek for permission from the school authorities of the institutions where the students are to be picked for the research. The accuracy of the outcome of this research will partly depend on the cooperation of the researcher and the teachers of the selected institutions.

3.1.2. Experimental design

This project proposes the use of observational and questionnaire methods of collecting data in this research. Once the students are selected, they should be tested on social issues. This can be through administering tests, interview and questionnaire methods. The administered tests may involve questions drawn from real life issues like the ones attached to this paper. Kohlberg's theory can be used to design questions to ensure that the questions asked conform to the level of moral development the students are in. Other than the administration of tests, the students can also be given interviews on social issues. While designing the tests, Kohlberg's theory should be considered. Students between the ages of fifteen to twenty years are expected to be in the conventional morality stage according to Kohlberg. Questions designed to them should therefore be those related to law and order and also society in which they live in. The students should also be given social problems related to pre-conventional level. This will help determine the rate at which the students in the various schools develop socially. In addition to the use of interviews and questionnaire methods, the students' behavior can also be observed.

From the tests administered, the results should be recorded and analyzed. Deductions can then be made from the collected and recorded data. Should a higher proportion of students in the

coeducational settings show much prowess in the administered social tests, and solving social issues in comparison to the ones in the single-sex instructional settings, then it would be proper to state that coeducation is the best way to ensure that education fulfills its entire purpose of producing not only academic oriented students but all-round individuals who are able to fit well in the society.

4.0. Expected results and discussion

The main objective of this project was to investigate the effect that the type of school can have on an individual's social development. A directional hypothesis can be formulated for this project. The expected results of this investigation are that the single sex schools will be found to produce students who are not as socially developed as the ones in mixed-gender instructional settings.

It is expected that the students who were sampled from the mixed school will be very efficient in tackling the social problems that were addressed to them in comparison to the students from single schools. The mixed school students are expected to score higher in the administered social tests. The students from the single sex schools will be observed to do well in the pre-conventional tests than in the conventional stage tests. This is an indication that the students in the single-sex schools undergo slow social development in comparison to their single-sex school counterparts. From the observations, it is also expected that the learners from the mixed school will show possession of adept social skills in comparison to the single sex school students

The proponents of single sex education schools used to argue that the coeducation schools do not favor girls due to the fact that they are characterized by social distractions. These proposers

however, failed to note that in the single-sex schools there can even be greater distractions. There is observed to be relatively high cases of immoral acts such as lesbianism and homosexuality in single sex schools. These acts are not only condemned in most societies but also serve as great acts of distraction in academics of the students in these single sex institutions. The acts also show that the single-sex school students are not well developed socially. It is also wise mentioning that even in same sex schools students can still distract themselves (Klein, 185).

Single sex education schools impact negatively on children's socialization process in various ways. In the single sex schools prejudices about the opposite sex are usually promoted. The students from the single schools are usually observed to treat their opposite sex with doubts and suspicion and this is a deterrent to their social development. The socialization process has also been observed to be slow in children attending single sex schools as compared to mixed school students. This is due to the fact that there are a lot of social pressures in mixed-sex instructional settings in comparison to the single-sex institutions. These social pressures are effective for effective social development of an individual. Being that there are less social pressures in the single sex schools; the students usually develop at a slow pace.

The single sex schools do not give a real practical life situation that the students will get used to at the end of their education process. Girls and boys will need each other at almost every point in life, their interaction in school is therefore very important. Failure to interact is likely to cause problems to the single sex school students in future. The boys in single-sex schools are likely to be socialized into aggressive individuals and this may impact on their socialization with girls in the future. The single sex schools therefore do deny students an environment represents real life situation that can adapt the students effectively to life after school.

The single sex schools also impact negatively on socialization process in that they impart feelings of weakness in girls while promoting egoistic attitudes among boys. Boys will develop exclusionary superior attitudes as compared to girls, and this is likely to impair their social development (Dowd, 82). A closer scrutiny of the arguments put forth to support single sex education point out that single sex schools were to benefit only the ladies. Education being a socializing institution should promote a unisex form of education where both sexes' interests are brought to a common platform. The pertinent issue should be to improve the effectiveness of the mixed-sex schools.

From the above discussion it is evident that mixed sex schools are more effective and should be preferred for the all-round development of individuals. Education encompasses the social development of individuals as well. It is therefore imperative that the system of education that will effectively integrate all these dimensions of education be preferred. When there is need to choose between single-sex schools and mixed-sex schools, parents should go for the mixed schools. The findings of this research are expected to help parents make choices regarding the type of schools they should take their children to.

Further, this project recommends that future studies should be carried out to investigate the effect of the type of school on other aspects of a child's development such as personality and cognitive development.

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