

Learning Unit description sheet for teachers

**Understanding Adolescence and Gender**

**Part II – Understanding Gender**

**About the activity**

*This unit aims to facilitate students' awareness and sensitization about gender-related concerns in the society by providing them opportunities to think, write, talk and discuss about it. In this unit, students will work in groups. Each group will be given a picture card (newspaper/ magazine/ internet picture or photograph that exemplifies any instance of gender inequality relevant to the students' contexts. There could be different picture cards for each group, with each card representing a different example of gender disparity. Pictures chosen should provide avenues for discussion on different aspects of gender discrimination; enable awareness and sensitization towards concerns faced by any gender in society. Individual students in each group will study the card and write their responses to questions provided in the accompanying student worksheet. Later, students within each group will discuss their thoughts about the instance depicted on the card with their group members and make a collective presentation about the instance and their take-away from it, to the entire class.*

**Background**

Presenting students with relevant examples of gender discrimination seen in our society could be a way to make them aware regarding the existing situations of gender disparity. It is possible that many of them, boys or girls, may have experienced such discrimination at some time in their surroundings. Common examples which students may have noticed may include - certain household tasks done only by women or girls, type of toy a child is given is not determined by what the child would like to play with but by whether the child is a girl or a boy, remarks made about education being more important for boys because they have to build a career while girls will just stay at home and so on. However, it is also possible that some students may not even be aware that such situations exist. It is also possible that students may have not given gender discrimination enough thought to realize the unfairness of related conditions and consequences. This learning unit provides teachers and students a common platform to engage with and create awareness about issues related to gender discrimination. It may serve as an opportunity to sensitize participants about the injustice that is brought upon any person (male or female) only because they belong to a particular gender

**Learning objectives**

1. Understand the meaning of gender as a social construct
2. To become aware of gender discrimination in general, and specifically, within their contexts

## Vigyan Pratibha Learning Unit

3. Understand the need to be sensitive in one's attitude, behaviour and treatment of people from other genders

### **Novelty**

The learning unit requires students to engage as a group in discussions about the social concern of gender inequality. Students are expected to study the provided example related to gender disparity individually and share their thoughts with their group members. Each group will then discuss and present a collective understanding of the issue to the class. All students will also get to engage with examples presented by other groups during class presentations and discussions. This process, we believe, will require students to think about given situations and evaluate them from multiple angles. It may help promote a critical outlook and encourage students to articulate their thoughts and ideas in a clear as well as respectful manner. The facilitator can choose appropriate examples of gender discrimination to use in class. Resource material (\*images, stills / excerpts of videos showing advertisements can be obtained using the internet) could be chosen to specifically represent situations that students find relevant to their contexts. The learning unit demands students' reflection on their own thoughts about the issue as also becoming aware of other perspectives. The ensuing group and class discussions is expected to provide students with a required safe and open environment to engage with this sensitive issue.

### **Care and precautions**

In order to facilitate a constructive and smooth session on understanding adolescence and gender, teachers may find the following practices helpful.

- Encourage students to talk and express their views. It could help if we are not too critical or disapproving of what students may have to say.
- Accept students' views with an open mind. Their views may be varied and not align with our current understanding of adolescence and gender. Teachers and other participants should practice being non-judgmental in their approach to this learning unit. It is suggested to be open and accepting of varied views from students. If we become too critical, disapproving or negative in our approach, students may hesitate to participate and share their thoughts. At the same time teachers may initially have to face and gently respond to students' hesitation, or even disapproval regarding this activity.
- Initially if students do not talk, they could be encouraged to write down their thoughts, instead. Students could be allowed to write in their own language, using words they are familiar or comfortable with.
- Discussions may be encouraged when students have become a little comfortable with the topic. Students may be gently probed and encouraged to participate, maybe by asking of relatable and simple questions initially.
- Students' disagreements will have to be handled with care. Teacher could convey what is currently understood in science and not take sides with any of the students. Please see references below for current information on the topic.

## Vigyan Pratibha Learning Unit

**Prerequisites:** The understanding of gender as a social construct and concerns related to gender discrimination.

It would help if the teacher is familiar with the definitions (and examples, if any) of the terms relevant to this topic, before the activity. Some terms;

- **Sex:** The term *usually* refers to the anatomy of an individual's reproductive system and secondary sex characteristics. Sex can be defined as “observable physical characteristics that distinguish the two kinds of human beings, females and males, needed for reproduction”
- **Gender:** The term *usually* refers to social roles and identities that are based on the sex of the person or personal identification of one's own gender based on the sex of the person. Gender can be defined as “the cultural construction of beliefs and behaviors considered appropriate for each sex”.
- **Social construct:** refers to the role of human activity and imagination that contribute to our understandings. For example, money. In the case of gender – it relates to the expectations and beliefs that we associate with people with certain physical features. For example, females are often discouraged from ‘participating in sports or other activities that would build muscle mass, as this would be unfeminine’

**Material required:** Worksheets, writing material, picture cards / video clips (Facilitators/ teachers could use appropriate images sourced from magazines, newspapers or the internet. Video clips e.g. advertisements relevant to topic of gender disparity could be sourced from youtube)

**Conducting the unit:** Understanding gender and gender sensitivity

In this unit, students will be formed into groups with 3-4 members. Each group will be given a picture card / shown a video clip with the intention of eliciting thoughts on gender related issues. Students will be given worksheets to guide their thought process about the picture card/ video clip. Initially even with in groups students will respond individually to the questions on the worksheet. Subsequently, students in each group will share their thoughts and collectively frame a case on the picture card/ video clip to present to their class. The duration of this unit is roughly 80-90 min. One way to conduct the unit could be as follows:

- 1) Before giving the worksheets: Ask students what they understand by gender. If student say ‘man’, ‘woman’, ‘male’, ‘female’, ‘girl’, ‘boy’, teacher could write these terms on the board and ask students to think about the terms and what they mean. Students could be asked to categorize the terms. Teacher could then discuss the criteria students used to categorize the terms – leading to students’ coming to an understanding of what ‘male’ or ‘female’ mean and if and how that is different from saying ‘boy’ / ‘man’ or ‘girl’ or ‘woman’. This could lead to an explanation of how ‘gender’ and ‘sex’ are different.

## Vigyan Pratibha Learning Unit

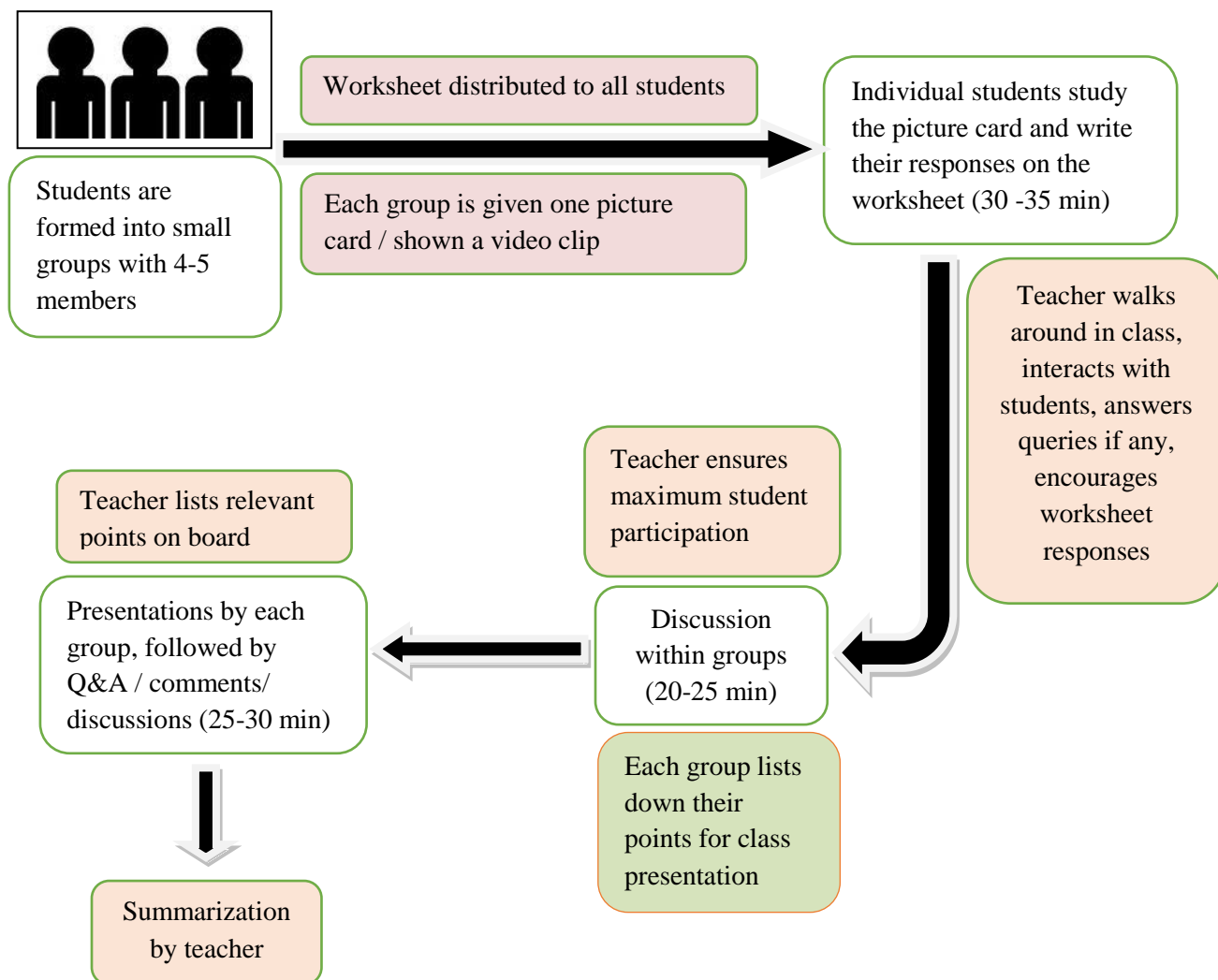
- 2) Teacher could then initiate a discussion on whether in the world we live in girls / women are the same /different from boys/ men? Teacher could write points on board as students respond. Subsequently students could be asked to categorize those points as ‘biological’ or ‘social’
- 3) Teacher will elicit as well as explain the meaning of ‘biological’ and ‘social’ and relate them to the terms ‘Sex’ and ‘Gender’
- 4) **Worksheets and picture cards will be handed to students who are already in groups.**
- 5) Teacher will explain that each student has to study the picture / watch the video and answer the questions given in the worksheet. Students will be given around 30 minutes for this.
- 6) On completion of worksheets, teacher will instruct students to discuss their thoughts about picture card within the group and come up with responses that collectively represent the group’s opinion for each question.
- 7) Teacher will sequentially invite one group after another to present their groups views about the picture/ video shown to them
- 8) Each group presentation will be followed by a brief discussion wherein students could ask questions to each other, to teacher or just share comments.
- 9) All this while teacher will write down points being made by students on the board which could be used to summarize the learning unit in the end.

### References:

1. Antrosio, Jason. 2012. “Gender is a Social Construction: Anthropology on Sex, Gender and Sexuality.” *Living Anthropologically* website, <http://livinganthropologically.com/anthropology-sex-gender-sexuality-social-constructions/>. First posted 16 May 2012. Revised 13 September 2017. Viewed on October 12, 2017.
2. Sex and gender distinction [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sex\\_and\\_gender\\_distinction](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sex_and_gender_distinction)

**Important Note:** Facilitators / teachers may please take care that the pictures / video clips to be used in this activity shouldn’t focus on unfairness suffered by any one gender only. Please include equal number of cases depicting discrimination against both male and females.

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**Figure 2:** General flow of the learning unit. Time required 80-90 minutes