Module 3: Content Materials

Gender (in)equalities in old age and older people's education are nurtured by their gender accumulated capital (experience). Gender experience, be it positive or not, is to be discussed in older adult education in the same way as older women's needs, interests, values, aspirations.

Engendered education is education that deals with gender issues while including learners' gender capital or gender experience in the educational programme. It helps older women understand who they are as old persons and older women. It also helps older women become more self-conscious and self-confident.

Only enlightened older women can eventually indulge into social engagement and activism related to gender issues. Social engagement is more often called social participation. Socially engaged women can become social activists devoting their time, energy, knowledge, even money, to the cause of women's rights, gender equality, etc.

1: Main concepts related to gender issues

Gender, male or female gender, is constructed socially. "One is not born a woman, one becomes a woman," says Simone de Beauvoir in The Second Sex. Or to put it differently, gender is under construction lifelong, affecting all parts of your life i.e. social, economic, political life, etc. It impacts your power and how resources are allocated to women and men. Gender is constructed socially and therefore its construction depends on time, space and context. **Luckily, what has been constructed socially, can also be deconstructed socially (through education, etc.)**

Men and women get socialized in society. Gender socialization is a process defined as acceptance of social norms and social roles. These are internalized by individuals through their whole life. Consequently, gender socialization leads to structuring relations of domination and subordination in society. Gender socialization is a process impacted by parents, significant adults and peers but also by the geographical and cultural environment. The process of gender socialization starts at birth: boys are socialized to take up men's social roles and women to take up women's social roles. Men perform their roles sequentially, while women perform several roles at a time.

Gender approach in older adult education is needed to understand social reality. Gender is not about women and men. It is about their relationships and not about women in isolation.

It highlights the difference between men and women's interests, it shows how their interest interact and how they are expressed, it highlights conventions as concerns hierarchies in families, communities, society at large. Gender approach is about approaching differences among men and among women based on age, class, wealth, etc. It is about the way social roles change as a result of economic, technological, political trends. The concept of gender approach is a dynamic one.

Gender issues are an integral part of culture: the way gender is understood by people of a community, the way men and women interact, their roles in society are all a matter of culture. **Gender issues as culture** are related to how women are treated in European film, literature, on TV. The mediation of gender culture by film, literature, advertisements, etc. is important. Today culture has integrative value: older people's culture, women 's culture. All groups have the right to their own culture to be expressed, heard, seen and listened to.

Older women should know that they have rights in different areas of life; economic independence, the right to work, equal wages, legal equality, the right to vote, the right to education, the right to emancipation, the right to their body.

The role of the church in shaping women's position dependent on their husbands' needs is to be understood.

2: Gender stereotypes are mostly denigrating opinions about men or women

They may comply with certain group characteristic's, real or assigned by society, but they do not comply with single representatives of the group. Thus all men are…all women are… all older women are fat, stupid, dependent poor learners, etc.

Gender stereotypes/social representations of older men and women are primitive thinking schemes about gender attributes, differences, roles of individuals and groups. They contribute to the status quo of gender roles. Social justice is an important prism through which to observe the position of women in society. There is injustice on the level of distribution of income, economic level, socio-cultural and symbolic level (stereotypes about older women).