

Endnotes

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it is measurable. Laws that are discriminatory or treat women and men differently can be identified and taken off the books. In this way, equality has been a critical tool for women's empowerment in many countries. However, the definition has been criticized by some who argue that equality implies a sameness between women and men and therefore discounts the social and biological differences between women and men that sometimes make it necessary to treat women and men differently but fairly. Gender equity takes into account the social differences between women and men in order to produce equivalent life outcomes for both. For example, in a society that values boys over girls, teacher preference often results in higher educational achievement for boys than girls. A gender equity approach recognizes this reality as discriminatory and then puts in place measures to overcome the bias against girls. A gender equitable solution to this problem will usually require a positive measure - sometimes called affirmative action - to neutralize the effect of discrimination. For example, a gender equity promoting solution to the problem outlined above would be to propose different criteria for university admittance for girls and boys. Girls' essays might be judged as more important than poor mathematics scores, or participation in extra curricular activities – possible for boys because they have fewer domestic responsibilities – would be weighted as less important for girls than for boys. These measures may not always address the root cause of the problem – that institutions and people discriminate against girls - but they do add a measure of fairness to the process of applying to university by seeking to redress the gender imbalances of the educational system.