

Webinar on Science, Technology, Innovation & Entrepreneurship in support of SDGs

Round Table I-NGO-UNESCO Liaison Committee , CMA-tlv

Report by Mr Arisitides Gomes, facilitator, Ex PM Guinée Bissau, Researcher in Sociology

Subject: Women and the school system

The round table brought together several actors, including the list below:

Introduction- Ms Justine Sass, Chief of Section, Education for Inclusion and Gender Equality, UNESCO.

Ms Elodie Akotossode, BPW Bénin, Cotonou- Computer engineer and manager; CEO Women EdTech and President founder of EU-funded Women In Tech project ; Ms Kaoutar Arhenbou, Project Coordinator with Project Soar NGO ; Ms Adama Sidibé, ANCEFA (CCNGO-Education2030 Coordination Goup), Board of Directors representing Academic ;

Mr Lucien Kouassi Kouadio, President of the International Humanitarian Foundation Maria Rosa Business Manager- special prize of CIFE 2019-International Council of Women Entrepreneurs (Excused for lack of connectivity)

Summary of the debate

Common points:

i) all the speakers are of the opinion that all the statistics of the countries concerned by the presentations reflect the predominance of girls in the fields of human and social sciences, while those of techniques and technologies are more sought after by boys.

Everything happens as if society were organizing this male predominance in technological spheres in order to reserve the mastery of science and technology to men.

ii) girls feel less confident in developing and applying their skills in training or professional testing sessions than their male counterparts even when they are better in class

iii) the participants also verified that when the social and environmental conditions of existence deteriorate, particularly in terms of standard of living, for example with the general impoverishment of the populations, shortages of water, firewood and other means of survival, girls find themselves more clearly impacted in a negative way

iv) that social inequalities to the detriment of women constitute a general phenomenon in all the fields where the participants find themselves in activity.

Comments on the major trends noted above:

The orientation and the priority and massive choice of fields of human and social sciences by girls while their male comrades are more in the "scientific" and technological spheres are rooted in two "sociological" dimensions: the first is founded in the

socialization induced to each other from early childhood. The girls are culturally oriented even by the games offered to them, focused on caring for babies (doll games) and they are inculcated with a kind of “cultural habitus” of household chores. In traditional education, things happen this way despite the efforts made by certain factions of the middle and upper classes to break with it and little by little. Even when girls and boys are all enrolled in school, we keep sometimes this habit of requiring individuals of the female sex to perform the domestic tasks that are dispensed to boys.

In doing so, the boys are offered games with motorcycles, vehicles of all kinds and various machinery. Theories or preconceptions of all kinds are conveyed within families and whose acceptance is negotiated between the different generations, end up institutionalizing codes. According to them, boys are “born” to perform technological functions.

That said, we are thus in the presence of a social treatment of sex differences from childhood, which “ultimately” structures the differentiated practices between girls and boys, which institutionalizes and tends to perpetuate inequalities between the two sexes. Which finally gives substance to male domination, erecting it to the supreme political function. Here, then, are the foundations of structural social inequality, between the sexes, in total antagonism with purely biological differences. This male domination is all the more marked and striking as it ends up being accepted by the whole of society and especially by women who assume it as if it were natural and meta-social.

Strategies for girls' access to science and technology

The challenge is to give more girls access to science and technology through teaching and learning. For this, strategies are needed that attack all the social order locks with a view to social changes capable of gradually dismantling the centuries-old cultural structures on the mental level that constitute the foundation of this male domination.

The latter in turn rests on the patriarchal system and domination in general.

The strategy must include not only the legal dimension but also the symbolic one with the establishment of "positive discrimination" in favor of women in general in all command and leadership structures to encourage a whole dynamic of women with a view to improvement of their self-confidence in the processes of participation and technological construction of their respective countries. To carry out this undertaking, all the institutions will have to contribute: i) the State, local administrations, universities and colleges, NGOs whose vocation is to promote the training of girls in technological matters, associations oriented towards "the advocacy" on the matter.

Aristides Gomes