

Conference

Gender mainstreaming in education Moving beyond theory, sharing practical insights

Brussels, 25 November 2014

Article for Capacity4dev by Olinda Martinho Rio

Experts Discuss "Gender mainstreaming in education"

In the right time Educade.be¹ decided to make its annual Conference fall on a day so emblematic for all who care about the concrete integration of the gender dimension in the sector of Education and Culture: **The International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women.**

“246 million children suffer from violence in and around school in many countries around the world - and girls are particularly vulnerable. School-related gender-based violence (SRGBV) is a violation of human rights and a serious barrier to learning. It's time for action. Girls should be able to learn without fear.”²

The Global Campaign for Education-GCE (2014)

The conference focused mainly on the concrete and practical aspects of mainstreaming gender in education stimulating the discussion of concrete interventions, programmes, measures and experiences for improving gender equity in education.

The following four research questions provided the base to the developed themes on [Educaid.be's](http://Educaid.be) [fourth annual conference](#), on the past November 25th in Brussels.

- *How can we move beyond ensuring girls and boys have access to schools, to preventing and reducing school drop-out and providing quality education for all?*

¹ Educaid.be - Belgian Platform for Education and Development

² The Global Campaign for Education (GCE) is a civil society movement that aims to end the global education crisis.

- *How can we ensure learning without fear? How do we create safe learning environments in schools?*
- *How can we engage with all components of the educational system, from teaching and learning materials, to teachers, school leaders, infrastructure, parents and society at large?*
- *How can we measure the effectiveness of gender mainstreaming in education?*

To enrich the discussion Educaid.be brought forward research and practical experiences from the world of education and development cooperation together – **academics and researchers, policy-makers and practitioners from non-governmental organizations.**

It was an opportunity for reflection and sharing on a topic that is very valued by DEVCOB4 as Education features prominently in the UN-led Millennium Development Goals process namely through MDG3 concerning on gender equality and are also reflected in the Education For All (EFA) goals agreed on in 2000. Also enhancing education is and will remain high on the international development agenda, including in the post 2015 process.

The Conference starts with an overview of the current situation on gender and education ³ followed by presentations on different sub-themes, such as school-related gender based violence (SRGBV), gender responsive pedagogy, water, sanitation and hygiene promotion in schools (WASH), measuring gender in education, closing with a theme as expected as pertinent: “gender, education and the post-2015 agenda”



³ UNESCO's flagship effort in promoting gender equality is well known. Maybe that's why UNESCO provides a remarkable presentation by Chief, Section of Learning and Teachers, Division of Teaching, Learning and Content, UNESCO HQs Paris.

Opening address⁴

Alexander De Croo, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Development Cooperation

Les programmes et les manuels scolaires contribuent parfois, quant à eux, de manière implicite, au maintien des stéréotypes sexistes et sexués.

Mr. Alexander De Croo **started** by emphasising how Education is important for everyone, but is especially significant for girls and women.

In the **Opening Address, Alexander De Croo, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Development Cooperation** emphasized how Education is important for everyone, but is especially significant for girls and women. “Investing in a girl’s education diminishes her poverty risk and gives her stronger economic leverage. Schooling girls also leads to lower infant mortality, lower maternal mortality and lower demographic growth. Also makes girls and women more empowered and emancipated. They are more likely to participate in public life and grow more confident to stand up for their own rights”.

Proceeded by referring that by co-signing the Millennium Declaration with 189 heads of state, Belgium committed in education to focus its efforts specifically on eliminating gender disparities in primary and secondary education. He also highlights that Programs and textbooks sometimes contribute, in turn, to implicitly maintaining sexist and gender stereotypes. **Concluded** by declaring that **physical violence against girls and women continues to be a global pandemic** illustrating with two examples:

- Worldwide 700 million women alive today were married as children, 250 million of them were even married before the age of 15.⁵
- 30 million girls under the age of 15 remain at risk for genital mutilation, while 130 million girls and women have undergone the procedure.

⁴ This opening speech only come at noon and not at 9.30 as expected. As explained by the Deputy Belgian Prime Minister himself, he was late because he was taking his childrens to school as usually, two days a week, as a way to collaborate in household tasks.

⁵ On this November 21, in New York, the 3rd United Nations Commission for Social Affairs, Humanitarian and Cultural adopted a resolution on child marriages, calling on States to put an end to this practice urgently. A historic resolution that Plan International calls for, for years!

“The cost and consequences of violence against girls and women last for generations. And the cycle of violence is often passed from mother to child. Educating girls and boys is probably one the most cost-effective, long term means to stop the violence.”

Gender and education: an overview of the current situation

Maki Hayashikawa, Section Chief (ED/TLC/LTR)

UNESCO

Promoting gender equality is at the core of UNESCO's Education Programme and inextricably linked to its effort to promote the right to education for all.

Dr Maki Hayashikawa made an overview of the current situation on Gender and education. She starts referring the three dimensions of gender equality and education:

- gender equality to education opportunities (access),
- within education (contents, teaching and learning context and practices)
- and through education (learning outcomes, life and work opportunities).

She proceeds by **highlighting** that despite significant progress made since 2000, the latest global projections indicate that **many countries will not achieve the gender-related Education for All (EFA) goals and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) even decades after the set deadline.** The implications of the **alarming state of gender inequalities** in education will need to be clearly addressed **in the ongoing discussions on the post-2015 education agenda.**

Maki Hayashikawa **concludes** that the international community needs to advocate for increased policy attention to/and investment in training, recruiting and deploying qualified teachers, particularly female, and to mainstream gender in the teaching profession in order to break the vicious cycle of gender-based discrimination that continue to be reproduced in the education system. Also said that promoting gender equality is at the core of UNESCO's Education Programme and inextricably linked to its effort to promote the right to education for all. Actually we can we can state on its website that "the 2016 Education Report will be on education, sustainability & the post-2015 development agenda <http://bit.ly/1CEnpgc>. Educating girls is one of the most effective ways of averting [#childmarriage](http://bit.ly/1ypTRwl) & early births: <http://bit.ly/1ypTRwl>".

Promoting Equality and Safety in Schools – Plan’s experience

Alex Munive, Global Girls Innovation Programme Manager Plan International

This program model can be adapted to fit a particular context and be applied to various countries/regions.

Alex Munive, works for Plan International leading the Global Girls Innovation Programme. The GGIP is a collection of Plan’s flagship programmes on girls’ empowerment and rights.

In this session he tried to raise awareness about Plan’s regional programme: Promoting Equality and Safety in Schools (PEASS) that **aims to make the education systems in Asia gender responsive with zero-tolerance to School Related Gender Based Violence (SRGBV)** and can be adapted to fit a particular context in various countries/regions. The programme reflects the findings from the multi-country research which took place in partnership with **International Centre for the Research on Women (ICRW) in 2013-2014** in Pakistan, Cambodia, Indonesia, Nepal and Vietnam that aims:

- To explore the magnitude and nature of SRGBV in, around, and on the way to school and what encourages or impedes responses to it.
- It provides an understanding of the perceptions of adults and youngsters towards SRGBV and the mechanisms to report it.
- The research used participatory programme feedback tools that focus on benchmarking perceptions that are then explored qualitatively.

Based on this driving factors, as well as programmatic best practices, Plan has built a theory of change and programme model to make schools gender-responsive.



The FAWE Gender Responsive Pedagogy

Martha Muhwezi, Senior Programme Officer FAWE, Forum for African Women Educationalists

*The **Gender Responsive Pedagogy (GRP)** has greatly contributed to improved retention and performance for girls, as well as the overall quality of learning. The GRP model therefore responds to African governments’ education priorities to attain gender equality and to improve the quality of education*

FAWE’s⁶ representative introduces participants to the FAWE GRP model, describes how and why it was developed and how the model can be used. The presentation also shares the lessons that FAWE has learnt over the years of implementing the model, and highlights the positive results as well as the challenges that have been overcome and are still being addressed. It also makes recommendations on further steps to strengthen the model.

⁶ The Forum for African Women Educationalists (FAWE) is a leading pan-African NGO working to empower girls and women in sub-Saharan Africa through gender-responsive education. FAWE works within the ambits of national governments in African to promote the MDG/EFA goal of gender equity and equality in education by fostering positive policies, practices and attitudes towards girls’ education.

FAWE's⁷ aims:

- To equalise education opportunities for girls in sub-Saharan Africa so that their life chances and opportunities improve.
- To ensure they grow to be women with knowledge, skills and the right disposition to contribute to the economic, social and democratic development of their societies.
- To influence governments, international organisations and local communities' attitudes, policies and practices which support learning environments that encourage girls and boys to learn.

One of FAWE's flagship models is **Gender Responsive Pedagogy - GRP**. The GRP model has been implemented since 2005. It was piloted in three FAWE Centers of Excellence in Kenya, Rwanda and Tanzania and later extended to other schools and teacher training institutions (TTI) in Burkina Faso, Ethiopia and Senegal. Currently, the GRP model has been integrated in pre-service Teacher Training in Ethiopia, Kenya, Malawi, Tanzania and Zimbabwe. The model is designed to cultivate in teachers the knowledge, skills and attitudes that enable them to respond to the learning needs of girls and boys by using gender-sensitive teaching and learning processes and practices.

As the world plans for education beyond 2015, FAWE calls upon all stakeholders concerned – donor partners, governments, international development agencies, education institutions and communities – to embrace this model as a strategy for improved education quality and to be rolled out to more institutions to multiply its impact.

It was a very acclaimed and debated session.

Measuring gender in education

Joan DeJaeghere, Associate Professor Department of Organizational Leadership, Policy & Development, University of Minnesota

⁷ The Forum for African Women Educationalists (FAWE) is a leading pan-African NGO working to empower girls and women in sub-Saharan Africa through gender-responsive education. FAWE works within the ambits of national governments in African to promote the MDG/EFA goal of gender equity and equality in education by fostering positive policies, practices and attitudes towards girls' education.

Dr. DeJaeghere co-led a research project on education for marginalized girls and boys, with CARE USA and CARE local staff in 8 countries. Currently serves as co-principal investigator of The MasterCard Foundation-sponsored Learn, Earn, Save project that is assessing the impact of entrepreneurship training on the lives of disadvantaged youth in East Africa.

She spoke of the need of "Measuring gender in education" as gender inequalities can be addressed in many different ways in education programmes. She presented to the audience different ways in which gender is conceptualized in education. She then provides examples of measures that capture gender norms and relationships in and beyond education. Finally, it tried to show how programme staff might observe and document how gender inequalities change in daily interactions, and the implications of this for education programmes.

"The ways that gender and gender inequalities are conceptualized has implications for how programme staff address and measure it".

can be addressed in many different ways in education programmes.

The Girls Empowerment Programme of the Study Hall Foundation in India (case study)

Urvashi Sahni, Chief Executive Study Hall Educational Foundation

Dr Sahni's presentation discussed the direction of the global education discourse by describing in-depth a case of girls' education in India. She argues that while in the last few years, there has been much progress in moving the global education discourse from inputs (enrolment and parity) to outcomes (learning), this welcome movement does not go far enough. **In order to seriously meet the goal of gender equality the global discourse must go beyond numbers and embrace a life-outcomes approach.**

Dr Sahni's maintains that "simply providing access does not lead to empowerment. Gender equality is a goal in its own right. Mere access to schools will not lead to gender equality, nor will an education that does make empowerment of girls and gender equality its central focus." The in-depth case study provided show how empowerment education in India that uses critical feminist pedagogy in order to help girls examine gendered power structures and serves girls' needs by shifting the focus from learning outcomes to life outcomes.

Concluded with key recommendations for girls' education globally and in India.

Looking toward the future: gender, education and the post-2015 agenda

Elaine Unterhalter, Professor of Education and International Development Institute of Education, University of London

The post-2015 agenda regarding gender and education needs to take account of our assessment of policy gains and losses in the past, the assessment we make of the present, our aspirations for the future and our sense of what can feasibly be achieved.

This words starts the last but not least panel of this Conference: **Looking toward the future: gender, education and the post-2015 agenda. Elaine Unterhalter, Professor of Education and International Development Institute of Education of the University of London** made an overview on some of the reflective, critical and wide-ranging discussions that have characterised consideration of the post-2015 agenda and that are particularly welcome, notably some of the aspirations regarding women's rights and gender equality and the diverse ways in which these have been canvassed.

The assessments, according to Professor **Elaine Unterhalter** making veer between:

- deep pessimism at the scale and intensity of global inequalities, which have particular gender effects;
- the narrow window of time remaining for addressing a multitude of environmental injustices;
- and some guarded optimism at the expansion of education provision that has taken place.

In this talk features of the past and the ways in which meanings of gender equality in education have been struggled over where revued. Also some assessment of the different constituencies engaged in shaping the post-2015 agenda for gender and education.

Dr. Elaine Unterhalter distinguish between a processes that have happened top-down, and bottom-up, and emphasized the importance of paying attention to connecting these through building some of the processes of the middle – **that is work with teachers, administrators, a wide range of professionals, and interpreters of the current context** – to expand and support a contextually rooted understanding of rights, equalities, and the inter-connections of development. She advocated that building the contexts in which this constituency can reflectively and critically contribute to connecting top-down and bottom-up initiatives offers an important space for realising

the range of demands that most fully expresses commitments to securing the inter-connections of rights and capabilities and aspirations for gender equality and education in the post-2015 agenda.

Conclusion

Transversal to the topics covered on this Conference **we can conclude:**

1. - Education policy is increasingly being seen as one of the most important issues in the development policy discussion and debate.
2. - It constitutes an effective response to poverty and vulnerability⁸ and inequality.
3. - The importance of values in development policy, namely respect to Gender balance and Equal opportunities
4. - "EU development policy is still very much relevant and needed."⁹

As said in past 10 December, in Oslo, by Malala "the girl who was shot by the Taliban" but "the girl who fought for her rights" and now, the girl the most younger "Nobel Laureate" :

"Education is one of the blessings of life—and one of its necessities. ...We wanted to make our parents proud and prove that we could excel in our studies and achieve things, which some people think only boys can."¹⁰

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Brussels, 25 November 2014

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⁸ <http://capacity4dev.ec.europa.eu/education-and-development/dashboard#sthash.C2y1AYkk.dpuf>

⁹ Fernando Frutuoso de Melo, Director General for International Cooperation and Development, European Commission; St. Antony's College, Oxford, UK, 10th of November Seminar: Is EU Development policy still relevant ? Why and what for?

¹⁰ http://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/peace/laureates/2014/yousafzai-lecture_en.html