Wikigender online discussion: synthesis report

"Addressing gender stereotypes in the classroom: how to achieve a conducive environment for adolescent girls' learning?"

16 – 20 January 2017

Context

Education is a proven driver of gender equality and sustainable development. Yet girls still have fewer opportunities than boys to gain access to, complete and benefit from quality education.

Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4, which aims to "ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all", reflects the global recognition of the need to address gender inequality in education. Realising these commitments will require tackling the many obstacles facing girls including discriminatory social norms, negative school environments, and concerns around safety and access.

In this context, Wikigender hosted an online discussion with UNESCO from 16-20 January 2017 on the theme "Addressing gender stereotypes in the classroom: how to achieve a conducive environment for adolescent girls' learning?" The discussion was held in partnership with the Global Partnership for Education, the United Nations Girls' Education Initiative (UNGEI), Forum for African Women Educationalists (FAWE), and the Council of Europe.

The discussion concluded with a webinar streamed live on Wikigender with expert participants: Kate Redman (GEM Report team, UNESCO); Liri Kopaçi-Di Michele (Council of Europe); Nora Fyles (UNGEI) and Hendrina Doroba (FAWE). The Webinar was an opportunity to hear directly from experts about work they are currently pursuing and to look ahead at the implementation of the SDGs' gender and education targets.

BOX 1: Wikigender Online Discussion: How does the learning environment influence adolescent girls' education outcomes?

1. What are some of the recent trends in the development of teaching materials (including textbook content)?

2. What are some of the policies, campaigns and initiatives that successfully helped to counter gender stereotypes in school settings?

3. Which strategies are more efficient and why? How can we scale them up?

4. How can we advocate for a stronger measurement framework and solidify indicators on gender inequality in education, so that we know where progress is being made and where challenges remain?

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COUNCIL OF EUROPE · CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE · FAWE Forum for African Women Educationalists / Forum des éducatrices africaines · UNGEI United Nations Girls' Education Initiative · wikigender · UNESCO United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization · Global Education Monitoring Report · GLOBAL PARTNERSHIP for EDUCATION globalpartnership.org · OECD dev DEVELOPMENT CENTRE

📢 Key messages

The importance of addressing gender bias in curriculum

The online discussion began with a presentation of some of the main findings from Textbooks pave the way to sustainable development, produced by the UNESCO Global Education Monitoring (GEM) Report. The findings showed the extent to which secondary school textbooks from the 1950s until 2011 missed or misrepresented key priorities now known as crucial to achieve sustainable development, including gender equality.

Participants agreed that governments need to reassess their textbooks urgently to challenge negative gender stereotypes. Examples included using neutral and inclusive language or having gender-equitable illustrations in textbooks, and participants shared useful resources for policy makers and textbooks revisers in this regard.

The discussion was an opportunity to exchange on successful initiatives to mainstream gender norms in textbooks as well as find to solutions to persistent challenges.

The role of teachers in both perpetuating and challenging gender stereotypes in the classroom

Teachers can play a key role in perpetuating or challenging negative gender stereotypes in the classroom. As participants noted, teachers often unknowingly reinforce divisions between boys and girls in schools, for example by regularly calling on boys instead of girls or assigning classroom tasks along stereotypical lines such as asking girls to clean.

> Gender bias is still a significant problem, with less than 15% of countries integrating key terms such as 'gender empowerment' or 'gender-sensitive' in their curricula, while half mention 'gender equality'.
>
> Kate Redman (GEM Report team, UNESCO)

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On the other hand, teachers can be allies in the fight to overcome negative gender stereotypes by encouraging girls to participate in class or pursue subjects traditionally perceived as masculine, such as science and math. However, as Martha Muhwezi from FAWE noted, this will require "building the capacities of teachers to use a gender-responsive approach in the teaching and learning process''.

Creating a positive and safe school environment to encourage girls' participation in particular in relation to STEM subjects

Participants raised the issue of subject segregation with few girls pursuing Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) subjects. As the OECD's Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) shows, girls and boys show no significant difference in aptitude in these areas.

Possible entry points to promote girls' interest in STEM subjects include the use of information and communication technologies (ICTs) and "networks and partnerships with parents to change mind-sets"

Liri Kopaçi -Di Michele (Council of Europe)

However, girls are less self-confident than boys in their maths and science problem-solving skills and report stronger feelings of anxiety towards mathematics. As participants noted, this is linked to negative gender stereotypes in the classroom perpetuated by students, teachers and parents.

Social Media Impact

#genderbiaschat : On Twitter**,** 216 people participated in our online discussion. 420 tweets were sent and there were over **7.6 million** impressions of our tweets.

From 16 to 20 January, Wikigender had **24730** page views. It had more than **16500** active users. The five top visitors of our page were from India, United Sates, Mexico, United Kingdom and South Africa.

▶ The webinar had more than 150 views.

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FAWE's Gender-Responsive Pedagogy (GRP) model

FAWE's Gender-responsive Pedagogy Model (GRP) aims to ensure that teachers acquire the knowledge, skills, and attitudes to respond to the learning needs of girls and boys by using gender-aware classroom processes and practices. For example, the integration of GRP in pre-service teacher training colleges in Malawi shifted attitudes and practices of trained teachers, who became more gender-sensitive. One primary school teacher was quoted: "*When I plan my lessons, I do it with the girls and boys in mind. If I have six questions, three will be for boys and three for girls. My learners know there is no escape in answering the questions posed*". As a result of GRP, girls also participated more actively, improved their confidence, and their school enrolment increased.

Since FAWE developed the model in 2005, several African countries have applied GRP, reaching over 12,500 teachers through teacher training institutions. Examples shared included Ethiopia, where the GRP model was adapted and integrated in the teacher training curricula and translated in Amharic; and DR Congo, where FAWE's teacher's guide on GRP was adapted to the specific context of agricultural technical schools. The adaptation of GRP in different contexts shows its strong potential to foster girls' access to, participation, and successful completion of their education cycle, free of negative gender stereotypes.

Viet Nam: National Strategy on Gender Equality for 2011-2020

The Vietnamese government has taken action to develop a new national approach towards gender equality in the educational field. It includes the implementation of the Gender Equality Law 2006, the Action Plan on Gender Equality of the Education Sector 2012-2015, and the National Strategy on Gender Equality (NSGE). The NSGE aims to ensure the equal participation of boys and girls in education and training.

The strategy stipulates the development of gender-sensitive educational strategies and policies; the adoption of policies for a number of target groups; the incorporation of gender equality content in the curricula of the national education system; enhancing the capacity and awareness of educational managers and teachers on gender equality; and equipping education officials at all levels with knowledge and skills related to mainstreaming gender equality into educational planning and policy-making. Furthermore, the Strategy stresses the relevance of developing, producing and using gender-sensitive statistics and indicators to eliminate gender disparities at all educational levels and grades in order to achieve the SDGs.

ICTs to promote Girls' interest in STEM subjects

The online discussion highlighted that girls remain vastly under-represented in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) subjects in school. Negative gender stereotypes related to STEM-subjects at school further impact girls' choices of courses at university level and influence women's career choices. Participants highlighted "the growing influence of technology in the learning environment" (Liri Kopaçi -Di Michele) and the potential of Information and Communications Technology (ICTs) for challenging such gender stereotypes.

Two examples from UNESCO highlighted how ICT can support girls' learning. The UNESCO International Institute for Capacity Building in Africa (UNESCO-IICBA) piloted ICT-approaches in many African countries, using visualizations and animations to support understanding of complex topics. The approach also encourages flexible learning through mobile phones or laptops, enabling girls to study at their own pace and develop collaborative skills. In Tanzania, UNESCO is training teachers on how to integrate ICT into their teaching and learning methods, so that adolescent girls benefit from digital learning. This also included establishing a digital school to enhance teachers' pedagogical skills and the performance of adolescent girls from hard to reach and disadvantaged pastoralist communities in Ngorongoro, through the learning management system "ELIMIKA" ("Learn" in English).

Key Links

- OECD Development Centre's Social Institutions and Gender Index
- OECD. PISA 2012 results: The ABC of Gender Equality in Education: Aptitude, Behaviour, Confidence
- FAWE
- Health Behaviour in School-Aged Children
- The Council of Europe
- The Global Partnership for Education
- UNESCO: Women's and Girl's Education
- United Nations Girls' Education Initiative

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