

Report of the breakout session on Fostering equal opportunity for young men and women in formal and non-formal education

The session started with the introduction of the facilitator and the two experts

Facilitator - Richard Francis, APEH, Secretary General of IYCS and the Secretary as well as in charge of youth and youth NGOs in the NGO-UNESCO Liaison Committee

Marie Boucaud – Business Professional Women

Alexandru Coicau – in charge External Relations Manager, World Organisation Federation of the Scout Movements

This was followed by informal get to know each interaction by participant to create safe and friendly atmosphere for the interaction as well as create more networking opportunities which was one of the forum objectives.

The participants were invited to discuss in small groups of 3 and 4 their reasons for choosing the breakout session and their expectations for the session. Some of the expectations/concerns that were shared include

- Why are there more women than men in the session room?
- Discuss issues of Gender pay gap in most countries
- Violence against women
- Leadership roles
- Discuss grey areas especially in gender studies and sexuality education
- Strategy and tools for increasing women participation
- Talk about equal opportunity in general beyond just educational sector

This was followed by the first pool on whether there are enough institutional frameworks in the participants respective countries that guarantees equal opportunity for young men and women in formal and non-education?

25% of participants said they had no institutional framework at all, 19% had sufficient institutional framework and the rest of the participants are somewhere between having sufficient or no institutional framework at all.

This led us to the interview with the experts who first shared a bit about the actions of the respective organizations and how they foster equal opportunity for young men and women. The experts believe there are enough institutional frameworks, however implementation is poor and so believe that the CSOs/NGOs have an important role to play not only to ensure the implementations of policies by the stakeholders but also providing the platform within their organization for the fostering of equal opportunities through participations.

Part of the reasons for the gender gap identified by the experts are that;

- Two third of all non-literate are women
- Poverty, disability, minority status, early child marriage which robs most young girls of their youthfulness etc are other factors create unequal for young men and women.

The experts argued that even if issues of inequality affect both gender, young women are the most vulnerable and this they believe is a structural problem. They however believe that constantly talking about it and making effort to combat it is important, as equality guarantees a stable society.

Part of the concerns raised by the participants include the question of how to bridge psychological gap, leave for both parents when they have new babies, choices of men over women by some employer.

They also noted that gender gap is global issue and not just an issue of a few countries as may have been erroneously opined by some. They encouraged women to do more to take up their rightful place by demanding their rights and not to always wait to be giving opportunity.

The participated also noted that though the issue of equality is a global concern, we cannot have one universal solution for all due to the diversity of each realities and whatever solution that is thought of must therefore be context sensitive.

A second pool which focused on whether the SDGs provide enough goals for fostering equal opportunity for young men and women in formal and non-formal education

greater percentage of respondents were in the middle points between the objective being enough and not. The debriefing shows that though the goals and objectives are there, more must be done to ensure actual implementation.

Some of the proposals for action made by the participants include;

1. Include the private sector in discussion about gender equality
2. Include challenging questions in educational curriculum
3. There should be constant and continuous review of the policies to ensure that they respond to emerging realities
4. Collaboration is very important, hence, there should be platform for cross sectoral stakeholders' collaboration
5. Reflecting on the history of discrimination in schools
6. emphasizing the importance of story-telling
7. Incorporate other components such as domestic violence, LGBT, Abortion, etc in
8. gender discuss
9. We should promote the respect for the dignity of every human person rather than relating with people based on the specific gender
10. Do not focus on tackling gender equality issues alone but to also promote human connections to foster relationship
11. Find innovative ways of promoting gender equality. An example was the project of a young Saudi woman is promoting gender equality through the provision of special 'Abaya' that allow women to cycle

Follow up

Considering the need to further deepen the conversion beyond the interactive session in Riyadh, it was proposed to create platform for sharing of ideas and best practices amongst participants to find better ways of fostering equal opportunity for all which one of the expert agrees to start up a WhatsApp group for this.

Richard Apeh, UNESCO-NGO Liaison Committee & JECI member

UNESCO –NGO Forum 3-4 May 2017

Minutes on fostering equal opportunities between young women and men in formal and non-formal education, 4 May 2017

Session started with a global picture of inequalities between young women and men and their challenges in formal and non-formal education, followed by the importance of the work carried out by experts Marie Boucaud and Alexandru Coica's respective NGOs - Business Professional Women (BPW) and World Scout. At first, essentially comprised of questions and answers orchestrated by facilitator Richard Apeh, workshop rapidly turned into an open and direct exchange with the audience, keen on talking about the "real questions", which have been reported below, as well as the answers that were brought:

- Men's low attendance in this session showed men still viewed it as a "women's subject", while gender equality is an important topic, which must be addressed by men as much as by women;
- Gender wage gap between women and men is an international issue → BPW raises awareness about this topic on Equal Pay Day (EPD), the 1st day women symbolically get paid - this year, starting date was the 31st of March);
- Domestic violence against women → The need to stand by women's sides to support them;
- Strategies/tools to increase participation of women in high positions → BPW is actively involved in this field, through the WEP (Women Empowerment Principles);
- Cycling for girls and women in Saudi Arabia is neither entirely legal, nor illegal, it is part of a grey area → The « Spokes Hub » project by Saudi entrepreneur Baraah Luhaid enables girls and women to cycle, through the creation of specific clothes;
- Discrimination in the selection of women/men in education: more men are chosen as Drs in Universities → Awareness should be raised right from childhood to avoid discrimination;
- The attitude to adopt in case of mansplaining → In the case of mansplaining/mansterrupting/praise of a man's comment initially voiced by a woman and ignored, female colleagues should support each other and repeat the same thing until it is heard;
- The importance of developing paternity leaves → Example of the French project "Mercredicpapa", an organization created by men who defend values that are different from the ones with which men are usually socialized, one of them being paternity leaves;
- Women should respect one another and take up the space they want men to give them, otherwise they will never get it;
- European women should put an end to their arrogance towards Saudi women, and work on their own issues; Saudi women should also take into account European women's comments → Instead of comparing each other and engage in conflict, we should work hand in hand together, just as women and men should work together too;
- Youth organisations, and the importance to raise awareness about gender equality;
- The challenges face by women with abortion stigma;
- Rather than gender equality, we should focus on gender equity → We can talk about both, equity being a foundation of equality;
- LGBT is a very important issue and shouldn't be forgotten → Education with a gender lens will enable the deconstruction of gender roles, and put an end to discrimination against gays and lesbians, as well as between women and men;
- Throughout the dialogues/exchanges we have, stories are powerful because they go beyond locations and divisions, and enable people to meet, whatever their gender or national identity.

This session, made up principally of women (about 70%), was particularly interactive and dynamic. A little less than half of the questions/sharings were made by Saudi participants, while the rest of participants came from Europe, Africa, North America and South America.

Marie Boucaud, Young BPW International Representative to UNESCO