

## Notes taken by students

### International Symposium

#### Education and Gender Equality

Wellesley College, October 20 & 21, 2017

#### Plenary Session – Friday, 1:15 p.m. – 2:45 p.m. – Is Education the Solution for Equality?

##### Introduction:

- Najat Vallaud-Belkacem, former Minister of National Education, Higher Education and Research of France

##### Speakers:

- Alice Albright, Chief Executive Officer of the Global Partnership for Education's Secretariat
- Ilham Lagrich, Public Health Consultant
- Prudence Carter, Dean and Professor of the Graduate School of Education at the University of California, Berkeley

##### Moderator:

- Leigh Gilmore, Distinguished Visiting Professor in Women's and Gender Studies at Wellesley College

#### Main points brought up by panelists and audience:

- Education is a universal right, but women still face disparities due to their gender. Even when they have received the same education as men, it is harder for them to find jobs and high-level positions.
- Gender stereotypes in education result in girls having lower self-confidence.
- Differences between boys and girls aren't connected to birth differences in their brains: it is through different socializations, based on their family environment and their exposure to media representations, that girls' and boys' brains change very early.
- Gender expectations, to which children are exposed at a very early age, are not a natural fact but a product of society: in certain cultures, for example, sweetness and sensitivity are characteristics assigned to men, while women are in positions of power.
- These differences in early childhood socialization create gender-based disparities in the job market. In particular, the push for youth to decide their careers early prevents them from forming their own interests outside of gender expectations.
- We must consider the role of history, culture, poverty, and racism in education. Girls face multiple exclusionary factors in conflict-ridden countries, poor countries, rural areas, etc.
- Ensuring that girls stay in school and changing the way women are expected to maintain a specific work-life balance will provide clear fiscal benefits and boost half of the population's economic participation.
- When thinking about education policy, it's necessary for us to consider intersectionality; we don't want to create an environment where only certain types of students can excel. We also must consider equitable policies that address specific cultures' and countries' needs (as gender imbalances in education differ between societies. Country ownership/leadership is necessary to

avoid imposing our own beliefs on other nations.

- Health and education go hand in hand – educated women demand better access to health service, which includes family planning (implied: reproductive health/sex education).

**Best practices evoked regarding public policies, corporate actions, civil society or academic initiatives:**

- Attempt to reduce/eliminate gender stereotypes from early education. In early childhood, increase time that children spend with their fathers.
- Delay (mandated) career decisions until later in individuals' lives.
- Invest in programs working on developing gender equity in education (training female teachers, building more schools near rural areas, etc.), especially in impoverished and conflict-ridden countries.
- Finance initiatives that help provide students access to education by bringing it closer to their communities, and training more teachers to teach within these communities.
- Implement teacher education focused on ethno-racial dialogues and understanding.
- Create a program that educates teachers on how to address both girls and boys about gender and the professional world, so that they can make career decisions without conforming to the pressures of society.
- Apply educational policy carefully in order to fit specific cultures. Strengthen the quality of education at the secondary and lower secondary levels in order to prevent girls from getting married too early.