

Notes taken by students
International Symposium
Education and Gender Equality
Wellesley College, October 20 & 21, 2017

Panel Discussion – Friday, 3:00 p.m. – 4:30 p.m. – The challenges of co-education

Speakers:

- Francine Deutsch, Professor of Psychology at Mount Holyoke College
- Linda Eisenmann, Professor of Education, Professor of History, and former Provost of Wheaton College in Norton, MA.
- Edith Maruéjols, Founder of the engineering consulting firm THE ARObE, Expert on the questions of equality in the urban space
- Fatou Diop Sall, President of the Gender Unit at the University Gaston Berger de Saint Louis in Senegal
- Ouafae Sananès, Advisor on gender and development studies and analyses

Moderator:

- Rosemary Feal, The Cornille Distinguished Visiting Professor in the Humanities at Wellesley College, Executive Director Emerita of the Modern Language Association of America

Main points:

- Educational policies, plans, and practices have rarely been conceived of with women in mind. Women are viewed as “incidental students.”
- Female professors see more equality in salary and status at women’s colleges.
- One option: sex segregation in education exacerbates the stereotypes of and disparities between men and women, so policies must look at coeducational institutions and ensure equality there instead of creating sex-segregated schools.
- The problem does not lie with coeducation but in the implementation and use of the degrees. In the MENA region, more than 50% of science degree holders are women, but they display little activity in the workforce.
- We must address gender-based violence in education before we can address gender equality.
- STEM professors are biased towards male students: male graduates are considered more deserving of mentoring from faculty.
- For women, education means they will have fewer children, take better care of them, work to contribute to the economic development of their country, and can negotiate on issues for their country and general well-being.
- We need policies to ensure that speaking out about and seeking justice for physical and sexual violence does not remain taboo.
- Stereotype threat – when they are expected to be bad at something, women do not perform as well as usual. To destroy stereotypes, we need gender mixing.
- Education affects the economic development of countries and women’s awareness of public health. Funding education is essentially tied to funding almost every aspect of societal progress.

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

- Provide more support and mentors for women majoring in STEM.
- Governments must get involved and prevent gender-based violence against girls in the classroom, or on their way to school.
- Include women's studies as part of the central required curriculum in universities.
- Take into account the idea of 'masculinity' in educational settings, and make sure our feminism includes dismantling masculinity.
- Encourage gender mixing in leisure activities.
- Use online platforms to report incidents of sexual harassment.
- Cities/states must ensure that education is at the forefront of discussion about public health and economic policy.
- Talk more about stereotypes, violence, and other taboo topics to promote understanding of issues faced by women in coeducational settings.
- Provide safe transportation to/from school for young women. Without safety guaranteed in the classroom, there cannot be a conversation on learning.
- A commitment must be made to improve access to education in rural areas and making sure this education is of good quality and equally accessible to all genders.