

<b>Forum:</b>	Education Committee
<b>Agenda:</b>	On measures to ensure equity of access to education for all genders
<b>Student Officer:</b>	Kassitty Lee

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## Introduction

The history of education is one of inconstancy. Education itself starts from the very first civilisations with their written records in languages incomprehensible to us now. Education then follows many diverging paths across the regions as civilisations and cultures developed, and still it did not take the shape that we now know it as. Each society refined their own versions of education, focusing on different aspects of what they each felt like should be nurtured in the young. The Aztecs of Mesoamerica valued song, dance, and poems of their culture in education of their young, whereas several dynasties of Ancient China believed in instilling strong senses of politics and social etiquettes in the children of the upper-class. Without any influence from cross-culture interactions just yet, these civilisations advanced their own systems of education, and that is the imprint that has been left on our world. As the times pushed forwards, the possibility of a cultural collision was inevitable, and education slowly developed into an outline of the systems we observe now.

However, there are several aspects of these collisions that took time to be debated, mulled, and fought over. One thing that was perhaps not taken as sincerely in early human civilisations, was the separation of genders in education. It is widely known, that no matter the region or the culture, there was an unspoken consensus across the majority of ancient civilisations that were certain jobs that were more fit for female individuals, and other jobs more fit for male individuals. This separation by gender as known then was not just a value of sexism, as it had a large impact on the systematical structure of education. In those times, physical duties and labour was often put before all else, so the educating of individuals was based on their career prospects. It is similar to what we have labelled as “vocational studies”, but there is a difference in the extent to which one’s education is based off of the vocations. Vocational studies as we know it, includes attending school with a mass of general information through primary, middle, and high school, before studying a specific area of careers in university. The type of vocational studies as conducted by the ancient civilisation, was training from very young ages for a very specific job, and they would never be able to deter to another. This is a drastic difference to education as we now know, as modern society opens the opportunity of general education to all, before focusing on a specific area. It was this type of job-focused education systems that doomed the equality of genders as civilisations developed alongside education.

The access of education throughout many age ranges, but particularly in higher-education, is being threatened in many places by the world’s history of sexism in education; The strong holding traditions of many regions in believing that certain genders are only suitable for certain vocations, and therefore only suitable for certain ways of education, only hinders the progression of the human civilisation. The olden belief that it is only appropriate that women stay home for household duties while the men leave to work, pushes us further into our past as women are thus not receiving the adequate education in aiding them to success in the modern world. If there is any desire to promote maximum efficiency and productivity in the work place, the gender inequality in education must first be solved. This inequality in education that has been present throughout history is now invited as conversation into our committee in order to raise potential solutions to a century-long problem.

## Key Terms

**Sexism** - A prejudice and/or stereotype against an individual on the basis of sex.

**Gender** - A form of labelling generally pertaining to an individual's personal identification of themselves, as modern definitions pull away from traditional definitions that relate the word to the basis of biological sex.

**Sex** - An identification of an individual based on physical characteristics presented at birth.

**Discrimination** - Unfair and prejudiced treatment of people based on certain individual characteristics including but not limited to gender, race, age, and sexual orientation.

**Gender inequality** - The social circumstances in which men and women are not treated equally.

**Gender gap** - The disparity in the way men and women are treated in society.

**Equity** - Providing fairness and justice to all parties involved, differing from equality.

**Equality** - Giving the same of something to all parties involved, differing from equity.

## General Overview

It should first be acknowledged that while the promotion of equal access of education across genders, there is the threat of lower female education, as caused by the historical trends of sexism and female discrimination. Therefore, an eminent threat towards the balance of education mostly correlates with the very root of gender discrimination. It is recognised that as female education rises, fertility, population growth, and infant and child mortality falls, and family health improves. Educated women are also more likely to be politically active and be better informed about their legal rights and how to exercise them.

Other factors such as quality of educational facilities, cultural differences, ethnic conflict, and financial situations, all work towards unbalancing the access to education on the basis of gender. The association between education and products of society is found in that without proper education, human societies cannot develop to its full potential, and especially if the balance is tipped for or against one particular gender. Female discrimination in terms of educational opportunities is not uncommon, and is most heard of, but there are many nations where the tip of balance is reversed, and this committee aims to find a balance, no matter where the tip is pointing against.

### *African Nations*

In sub-Saharan African nations, there are difficulties in eliminating gender disparities and ensuring equal access on all levels of educational and vocational training, particularly for people with disabilities, indigenous backgrounds, and/or children in vulnerable situations. According to the eAtlas as put out by the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS), sub-Saharan Africa has the highest rate of primary school-aged children out of school, with one in five children—23% of girls and 18% of boys—being out of school. Girls are generally disadvantaged as a whole, but particularly in Chad, the Central African Republic, and

South Sudan. The reason for this discrepancy could be found by the financially unstable situations for these areas, as when there is a lack in available seats for education, traditions of this region would require that male children take priority in receiving that education.

Interestingly, according to the UIS statistics, boys face disadvantages in Mauritania, the Republic of the Congo, Gambia, and Senegal, which differs from the general concept of gender inequality of education, as most often believe that gender inequality only tips against the girls, as noted in the referenced places. It should be noted that there are 19 African countries—Malawi, Uganda, Tanzania, Zambia, Ghana, Mauritius, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, Kenya, Burundi, Madagascar, Egypt, Burkina Faso, Rwanda, Democratic Republic of Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Zimbabwe, Gabon, and Tunisia—that have reached gender parity in primary education for both boys and girls in the last decade, which predicts a positive trajectory in the curve of reaching gender equality in education in African nations.

### *East Asian Nations*

While much progress has been made in East Asian nations as well as the Pacific towards girls' enrollment in school and gender parity in education, deeply rooted discriminations and inequalities still keep girls and boys from having equal opportunities in their education. There is a higher value placed on boys in many of those nations, and have led to sex selection even before the child is born. Girls are often at risk of child marriages in communities, an even early pregnancy, which forces them into carrying domestic workloads, reducing their chances of having equal educational opportunities. Their voices and participation in public and in society carry much less weight, and it also leads to violence against women and girls.

Despite the substantial progresses in primary education, there are still gaps that remain throughout the region, with many countries only offering secondary and higher education for select groups, leaving the rest facing inadequate support.

### *European Nations*

There has been social progress in terms of education, but there are still many differences and inequalities between girls and boys in school curriculum organisation, teaching methods and materials, guidance in careers, teacher training, and other aspects of education. The social roles associated with stereotypical representations of femininity and masculinity are replicated and reflected in the education when individuals are encouraged or discouraged from certain specialised areas due to their sexes. Oftentimes, girls' academic success does not lead to the elimination of employment inequalities, a gender pay gap, or inequalities in relation to care work.

In spite of the legal equality in the EU, the historical inequalities still prevent girls from reaching an equal plain in terms of education with boys. Furthermore, there is also a call for more attention towards low-performing boys, as they are often overshadowed by the general successes of men.

### *Latin American Nations*

Regarding Latin America, other than poor countries like Haiti, in 2019, nearly 100% of the girls between the ages of 6 and 10, had access to primary school education. But girls' right to education is not only to allow them scholastic access, but also to provide them opportunities to complete their cycle of

education, and unfortunately, it has not been possible in Latin America yet. In 2019, only 65% of girls completed their secondary school years(11 to 14 year olds), and less than half completed high school(15 to 17 year olds).

It is also estimated that the number of girls out of school have been impacted by COVID-19. Although there is no consolidated data just yet, the Plan International organisation conducted a survey among girls and women in 14 countries, and it was found that 62% of the interviewees felt that the main negative pandemic effect was being unable to go on campus for their education. Additionally, in countries that are affected by fragility and/or conflict, girls are 2.5% more likely to be kept from education than boys are, giving them another barrier to fight through for their education.

### *MENA Nations*

MENA nations, standing for the nations of the Middle East and North Africa, often have lower levels of women's education and labour forced participation even in comparison to other nations of similar incomes. There are many situations where gender discrimination is solidified into family laws or civil codes. Results of Egypt's Demographic and Health Survey (DHS) in 2000 provided insight on family preferences for investing in the education of their children. Women with children between the age of 6 to 15 were asked which child they would send to state if they had one son and one daughter. 53% said the decision depended on their children's capabilities, while 39% said their son should go to university, and 8% said their daughter should go. The very same survey also found that uneducated mothers would more likely cite the cost of education as a reason for not educating their daughters than for not educating their sons.

The MENA countries have made very significant strides for making education available over the last few decades, but even so, challenges remain. Access to education has been improved, and the illiteracy rate among the young adults(15 years to 24) is half of the adult population(15 years and up). More women are pursuing higher education, reflecting their abilities to graduate from secondary school, and in some countries, women even make up a larger fraction of university enrollment because many young women from those countries go abroad. Unfortunately, illiteracy still remains high in some countries and there are still wide gender gaps in the region.

### *Russian Federation*

In the Russian Federation, women's business life was restricted to the service sector all the way up until the 20th century, and women did not occupy the other economic sectors at a desirable level relating to society. This resulted in women being repeatedly directed towards certain sectors of education.

When the education levels of women and men over 15 was analysed in Russia, it was found that 469,000 women out of a 64 million female population received primary school education while 244,000 men out of a 53 million male population received primary education. This displays the fact that the number of men completing primary school education is only approximately half the number of men, which displays the improvement in women's education, but with a setback in male education. Women have also almost surpassed men in terms of higher education: 16 million women out of the 64 million female population over the age of 15 are university graduates, while only 11.5 million men out of a 53 million male population, are university graduates.

*South and Southeast Asian Nations*

In 2000, there was a predominance of male individuals in pre-primary to tertiary education across the Asia-Pacific region. As the number of girls going to school increased, gender parity was also reaching a balance. Female enrollments increased in tertiary education by 41 million between 2000 and 2016, which resulted in the participation levels for women being higher in many parts of the Asian-Pacific region today.

However, females in that area, particularly in rural areas, are still at a disadvantage, observable through the literacy levels among youths. Females in those rural areas also lag behind those from other socio-economic backgrounds, such as in Pakistan, where 86% of young males in rural areas were literate, as opposed to only 52% of young females in the same areas. Similarly, in Timor-Leste, 79% of young women in rural areas were literate, below the national average of 86%.

*United States of America*

In the United States, the progress of female education has been a big step, as well as result of, advancing gender equality in aspects of domestic and work life. The United States' story for female education and progress towards equality in gender has been similar to many other high-income and upper-middle income nations. Several organisations have been founded by the US to target the nations lacking in funding to resolve the gender gaps in education.

Miraculously, in just under two decades, the gender gaps in education have closed tremendously. Between 2000 and 2018, the number of primary school aged girls not in school fell by 44%, and by 2019, nearly two-thirds had achieved gender parity in primary education. However, progress has plateaued over the last decade. The US is one of the more progressive countries in ensuring that there is an equal access of education across genders, with many of its resources going towards guaranteeing there is equality in the education system.

**Major parties involved***Association for Childhood Education International (ACEI)*

The ACEI is a worldwide corporation that works to advocate for educational reform. Their tagline is “Bright futures for every child, every nation”, and they promote this through the Global Summit on Childhood and the Institute for Global Education Diplomacy. The summit invites many professionals to gather and discuss issues that children face in terms of education, health and well-being, as well as dispute solutions for noted obstacles.

*Global Convention on Higher Education*

The Global Convention on Higher Education is an agreement adopted during the 40th session of the UNESCO General Conference, and is the first UN treaty on higher education on a global scale. It establishes universal principles for fair, transparent, and non-discriminatory recognition of higher education qualifications, as well as qualifications for access to higher education, or other furthering studies and employment. It also establishes recognitions of qualifications, prior learnings, study periods, and promotes recognitions of refugee qualifications even when there is a lack of documentary evidence.

*The Global Partnership for Education (GPE)*

The GPE is a union that focuses on creating solutions for developing countries in terms of international learning. They focus on advancing education strategies, promoting collaboration in education, sharing solutions, financing implementations of programs, and monitoring results and data for the progress. As stated by their cite, they have put more than 22 million children in school since 2002, and increased worldwide literacy rates to 81% in 2010. Since 2004 they have also trained 300,000 teachers, built and equipped 53,000 classrooms, as well as purchased and distributed 50 million textbooks.

**UNICEF**

UNICEF works in over 190 countries to focus on children’s rights and to help them fulfill their potentials, including their educational rights and potentials.

**UN Human Rights Council (UNHRC)**

The UN HRC is a sub-body of the UN system created on the 15th of March in 2006, responsible for enhancing and promoting the protection of human rights around the globe, addressing cases of human rights violations, and building recommendations and solutions. These cases also include educational circumstances for individuals around the world where the UN can reach.

**Timeline of Events**

Date	Description of event
10th December, 1948	The Universal Declaration of Human Rights was drafted for the purpose of ensuring that all fundamental human rights are universally protected, including children’s right to education.
17th May, 1954	The Brown vs Board of Education ruling allowed the United States of America to prohibit racial segregation within schools, changing the educational system.
8th October, 1971	The PARC vs Pennsylvania Board of Education from the US was a decision in which intellectually or developmentally disabled children in particular were given their first steps in gaining an inclusive education.
29th November, 1975	Education for All Handicapped Children Act was established to support states, localities, and institutions, to protect all with disabilities.
1978	Warnock Report was introduced under the Education Act in England, introducing the concept of special needs education.
10th June, 1994	The UNESCO Salamanca Statement on Special Needs Education calls for the endorsement of inclusive schools through practical and strategic changes.

13th December, 2006

(adopted)

3rd May, 2008

(enforced)

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) was established, and follows the previous UN approaches towards changing the attitudes towards persons with disabilities, including their right to education.

26th August, 2016

The United Nations General Comment No. 4 on CRPD Article 24 demonstrated the right to education in relation to differences of culture, policy, practices, and gender.

## UN Involvement, Relevant Resolutions, Treaties and Events

The UN has involved itself in this issue many times in the past, with many agreements attempting to resolve this issue, and henceforth, there is a list of involvements that the UN has taken part in.

- **UNICEF Education Programme**
  - The UNICEF Education Programme is an active programme aiming to provide sufficient learning opportunities for children and adolescents to thrive with knowledge and skill. They focused on all levels of education, from age ranges, special individual conditions, to special environmental circumstances.
- **UNESCO Convention Against Discrimination in Education(1960)**
  - The UNESCO Convention Against Discrimination in Education was established in 1960 as the first legally binding international instrument dedicated to the human right to education. It worked to affirm that education is not a mere luxury, but a fundamental human right, and highlighted all obligations on the part of authorities for individual educational opportunity. It has done well to establish a preliminary foot-stone towards the betterment of education, but methods of education has greatly evolved over the last 6 decades and the convention is in need of modification.
- **“HRC Resolution on Realizing the equal enjoyment of the right to education by every girl” in 2016**
  - The resolution as conducted by the HRC in 2016 worked to ensure safe educational institutions, provide non-discriminatory opportunities of education, eliminate gender based stereotypes from educational processes, and prioritise education in budget plans. This has been the basis of many reforms in education of developed countries, and hence should be taken into consideration as reference for resolutions.
- **Country Commitments to Gender Equality in Education(2018)**
  - The 2018 Country Commitments to Gender Equality in Education was a paper that highlighted the crucial commitments that nations must hold themselves to when considering gender equality in education. It touched on harmful stereotypes, unprecedented effects of poor education, gender-based violence, lack of inclusive or quality learning environments, as well as poverty.
- **UNESCO Priority Gender Equality Action Plan 2019 Revision**

- As revised by UNESCO in 2019, the Gender Equality Action Plan is a third revision on the original action plan after taking lessons learnt from the first action plan's internal assessment processes. Including evaluations of challenges and lessons learnt, the Action Plan fulfils in great detail, the recommended solutions towards, in particular, human and financial resources for gender concern addressing.
- **UNESCO strategy for gender equality in and through education 2019-2025**
  - This UNESCO Strategic Plan was inspired by key findings of extensive consulting processes that drew from lessons and evaluations to improve the movement towards adequate action to achieve gender equality and empowerment through education for women. It has a deadline of 2030, and within it, tackles elements ranging from access to services and institutions, financing and cooperation for infrastructure.

## Possible Solutions

As the issue of equity in access to education affects millions across the world and has a potentially detrimental impact to the future of human society, it is crucial that any and all options for solutions be identified and considered.

### *Acknowledgement of the need for resources*

The first step of any crisis is a need for acknowledgement, and due to the unbalanced ratios of educators to students, there are often difficulties in terms of resources. It is crucial to identify the financial aspects necessary to fund these programs and create infrastructural change, as well as the need for hire in terms of educators and other staff.

### *Furthering movements away from gender norms*

Tradition has always stopped many elements of this movement across time, hence why it is central to the continuation of this campaign to do away with the old: to change the values, beliefs, attitudes and practices that are harmful to the path of progression.

### *Highlighting educational opportunities*

In order to consider fair advantages for all, particularly towards the issue of gender equity to access of education, it is necessary to identify all opportunities that can be taken on all levels of education, for all gender, for all features in education.

### *Instilling policies and institutions*

Due to the fluctuating nature of access to education on the part of women, it is even more crucial that policies are instilled to fully guarantee women's rights to education. History has ensured that most men are allowed a head start in education, leaving many women behind in the race, but there are also many instances where this stereotype is reversed, hence the necessity for institutions that are gender-sensitive and responsive to both possibilities.



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### **Contact Information:**

Please contact me or the individuals listed below with any questions regarding the speech or report and good luck!

Kassitty Lee - President Chair

WeChat ID: kst\_LSR\_XXXI

Email: [kassitty-lee@dongguan.qsi.org](mailto:kassitty-lee@dongguan.qsi.org)

Rosie Lee – Secretary General

[23rlee@student.uiszc.org](mailto:23rlee@student.uiszc.org)

Peter Pang – Head of Chair

[24ppan@student.uiszc.org](mailto:24ppan@student.uiszc.org)

Luke Ross Nuttall – Director of U2NESCO

[lrn@uiszc.org](mailto:lrn@uiszc.org)