

Panel Discussion: "Women Leadership and Empowerment - Contributions of Lifelong Learning"

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Key messages:

1. Education and gender equality are key to development.
2. International goals on education and gender equality do not envision fostering women's leadership.
3. Rationale for investing in women and girls' education is based on development needs.
4. We need to change our mindsets if education is to foster women's leadership potentials and true empowerment.

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UN MDG Summit: education and gender equality reiterated

- Education holds the key to empowerment of women and promotion of gender equality.
- Gender equality and education are mutually reinforcing catalysts of development
- Women and girl's education as underpinning the success or failure of achieving the other MDGs, e.g. education, health & nutrition, child mortality, HIV/AIDS

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Re-visiting EFA goals and MDGs

What do these international goals say about women leadership and empowerment?

- **EFA goal 4 (Literacy)** - literacy and continuing education as essential for women's empowerment and gender equality.
- **EFA Goal 5 (Gender equality)** - education of girls and women as having powerful trans-generational effect, and as key determinants of social development and women's empowerment.
- **MDG 2 (UPE)** - talks about UPE for all children, both boys and girls.
- **MDG 3 (Gender equality)** - gender parity in primary and secondary education by 2005 and all levels by 2015.

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The rationale for investing in girls and women's education...

- *... if women farmers are given the same education opportunities as their male peers, their yields of maize, beans, ... increase by 22 % (in Kenya)" (MDG 3 - gender equality and empower women).*
- *"... education... key to reducing child hunger in terms of educating mothers"*
- *"... giving mothers just five years of education... can lead to a reduction in child mortality of 40 per cent" or "A child born to a mother who can read is 50% more likely to survive past the age of 5..." (ref. MDG4 - reduce child mortality)*
- *"... mothers with secondary education are twice as likely to give birth more safely in health facilities as those with no education ..." (ref. MDG 5 - improve maternal health).*

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Empower women & girls for development and beyond?

- International goals on development emphasize women's contribution to the development of all other sectors but **other than their OWN.**
- Women's education is first and foremost for **improving/enhancing women's reproductive function and (economically) productive role in development**
- Indicators of women's empowerment in other development sectors goals (e.g. agriculture, political participation), do not clearly articulate the inter-linkages between that of education or lifelong learning for women.

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Limitations of international goals on education and gender equality

- The international goals are essentially concerned with the quantitative progress rather than the qualitative progress in terms of women's leadership and empowerment.
- It expects education to empower girls and women to participate actively in socio-economic and political life, but not necessarily take leadership.
- With the rationale given, women's empowerment through education do not result in fostering their leadership role because the goals do not envision beyond their development.

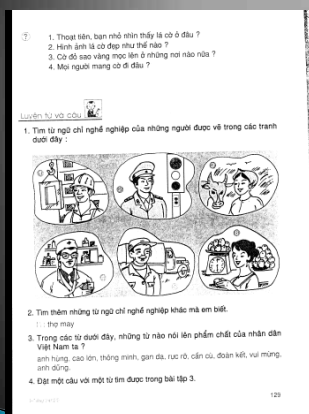
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Rationale affects education content, process and outcomes

- Gender-biased role reinforced...
 - Curriculum and textbooks
 - Teaching method
 - Teacher attitude
 - Feminization of education workforce
 - Low pay and status of teachers/facilitators/practitioners
 - Guidance on subject selection/areas of studies
 - Vocational guidance
 - Education sector working in isolation

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Inside a textbook...



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Women's employment in Vietnam

Areas of employment	Female (%)	Male (%)
Leadership	19.0	81.0
Highly professional/technical	41.5	58.5
Middle professional/technical	58.5	41.5
Ordinary staff	53.1	46.9
Private services, guards, sales	68.7	31.3
Agriculture, forestry, fishery	37.6	62.4
Handicrafts	34.7	65.3
Installation and operation	26.9	73.1
Simple jobs	49.8	50.2

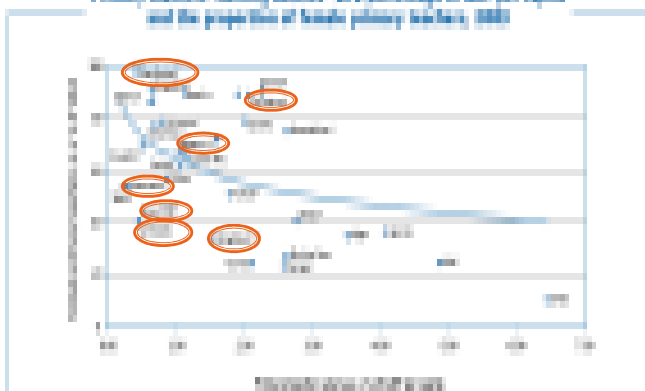
"Women are mainly employed in services and in jobs not requiring high technical skills. As a result, their earnings are low and ...few opportunities for ...(training and promotion)"

Source: Viet Nam, Achieving the Millennium Development Goals, 2005, p.16

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Salary level and female teachers

Primary teachers' working salaries as a percentage of GDP per capita and the proportion of female primary teachers, 1980



Source: Teachers and Educational Quality: Monitoring Global Needs for 2015, UNESCO Institute of Statistics, 2006, p.41 Figure 1.15)

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Changing our mindsets

- Move away from the over "targeting" – need for holistic approach to women's education and with a strategic action for laying the foundation for leadership.
- Locate education in the broader context of development and human rights– education does not exist in a vacuum.
- Education need to reach out to and work with other sectors, e.g. labour (school to work transition), health, agriculture, etc.
- Women's education and lifelong learning must be seen beyond the development goals.

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