

“Girls’ education is the closest thing we have to a silver bullet to help solve some of the world’s most difficult problems.” Safeena Husain (Founder “Educate Girls”)

Definition:

Education provides a foundation of general knowledge and skills. Teaches people how to learn, think critically, solve problems, develop strengths and passions, which can be used in any endeavor throughout life.

Training provides specific skills and knowledge that are needed for a particular job/task. Teaches people to be more efficient, effective and collaborative. Training also helps people develop their work-related strengths and passions.

(<https://www.edubrite.com/training-and-education#:~:text=Education%20prepares%20people%20for%20a%20career%20by%20teaching%20them%20the,important%2C%20but%20for%20different%20reasons>).

During the last decades, the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) predicted the need for lifelong learning for all women and girls in anticipation of future job and skill needs to minimize the adverse impacts of digitization and automation. The predictions included adapting educational and vocational curricula, and reskilling, upskilling and lifelong learning programs. Such initiatives would facilitate the transition of women, including older and young women, to new occupations and jobs, particularly in fields related to technologies, and especially for those at risk of being replaced by automation.

After intensive research into agreed commitments of world leaders together with the United Nations (UN), and civil society since 1995, this paper will focus on three key topics: quality and continuing education, quality conditions for educators, and education in the digital age.

1. Quality and continuing education

The 1995 Beijing Platform for Action (BPfA) recognized that access to lifelong quality education and training were powerful drivers for women and girl's development and were one of the strongest and most effective tools for reducing poverty and improving health, gender equality, development, and peace.

Although gender parity regarding quality education and training globally was close to being achieved before 2011 in most regions, the CSW sounded the alarm over certain concerns related to inadequate and low quality education. School systems remained underfinanced, under-resourced and failed to deliver high quality education. Investigations revealed that in many cases girls and boys are leaving school without having acquired the most basic literacy and numeracy skills, reducing the benefits of education for everyone.

The present status of the BPfA progress regarding quality education and training still falls significantly short of what member states committed to in 1995. There are concerning signs of stagnation and regression. This is further compounded by the difficulty female students face to obtain quality education during or after conflicts, pandemics, famine or natural disasters, displacement, migration or to those who are disabled, or live in remote or rural areas.

Addressing these disparities and investing in affordable, quality and continuous education is crucial to ensure access to inclusive and quality educational resources, training programs, and career advancement, including in emerging technologies.

Yet statistics show that more girls and women are in school than ever before, but higher levels of education are still not translating into equivalent job opportunities in the workplace. Increasing funding for the formal and informal education and training needs of women and girls should be a priority in development assistance programs.

2. Quality conditions for educators

Educators, including teachers, facilitators and trainers, are fundamental to ensuring quality education. Non-formal educators, like parents, also a critical part of the education system, will not be part of this analysis.

Teaching professionals face many obstacles. Female teachers and female students often face gender discrimination and stereotyping in their skills development. The lack of qualified teachers, particularly female teachers, remains a fundamental challenge in ensuring girls' access to high quality education as (education.as) the presence of female teachers has been observed to increase girls' attendance in school and in some contexts improved their learning outcomes.

Female teachers also face significant hindrances in educating due to a lack of decent work, equal pay, difficult working conditions and undervalued status. In some areas even the safety to and from schools, as well as in schools, or online, is an issue.

The feminized nature of education and training, including curricula, career counseling, as well as a lack of access to digital and climate literacy are also factors in failing to achieve the goal of providing quality education.

Occupation segregation in the teaching profession as well as in STEAM, emerging fields and the difficulty in providing quality and culturally diverse education are additional obstacles affecting the realization of women and girls' non-derogable right to quality education and training. Moreover, teachers are dealing with the changing nature of teaching, especially in our multilingual/intercultural and digital world, including many online risks.

More initiatives, including adequate funding for all educational budgets, are needed to raise awareness in our communities about the importance of girls' education and the necessity to improve the qualifications of teachers and education of staff. These initiatives can include distance learning solutions which are created in collaboration with

women and girls, and annual targets for the enrollment of girls in areas where gender disparities exist. Furthermore, the transformation, the public recognition and higher appraisal of the teaching profession is critical to attract a new generation of teachers.

3. Education in the digital age

Our research confirmed that since 1995, the UN has been urging Member States to equip all women and girls with a quality education that prepares them for the fourth technological revolution. It is obvious that the proliferation of digital technology and services has made quality education indispensable, and universally available. Digital education fosters economic opportunities, personal growth, and societal advancement.

Therefore advancing and guaranteeing quality education in digital literacy will enable women and girls to engage in online knowledge and information sharing, digital entrepreneurship, and remote work. This will also promote their financial independence, capacities for critical analysis, and interpersonal communication.

Continuous learning opportunities improve employability by equipping individuals with the necessary skills to navigate technology safely, identify risks, protect privacy, and thrive in the labor market.

All women and girls who are not educated and trained to control technology risk being relegated to second-class citizenship, isolated from local, national, and global communities, and being unable to achieve political, social, cultural, or economic development within the foreseeable future unless change occurs.

Summary

One of its strategic objectives listed under the BPfA regarding education is that Member States should promote lifelong, flexible education, training and retraining for all women and girls. Individuals should be enabled to benefit from an ongoing acquisition of knowledge and skills beyond those acquired during youth. This recommendation was included throughout the years after 1995 and reaffirmed by Sustainable Development Goal 4.

In 2023, CSW recognized that negative social norms, as well as gender stereotypes and systemic and structural barriers were still among the root causes of persistent gaps in women and girls' lifelong learning opportunities.

Meanwhile technologies changed the structure of labor markets which, although they provided new and different employment opportunities, also required lifelong learning of new skills ranging from basic digital fluency to advanced technical skills, STEAM and

IT.¹ These advancements would boost the employability of women and young people and foster the social inclusion of older persons in societies.²

In 2024, the Commission reaffirmed this commitment including to increase investments in inclusive, affordable and equitable quality education and lifelong learning opportunities to ensure women and girls acquire the knowledge and skills to attain high-quality jobs and participate in the sustainable economy.

There was further commitment and consensus among member states for early childhood education, youth and adult literacy programmes and initiatives, digital education, cultural education, education for sustainable development, digital technologies, skills enhancement, affordable higher education and vocational training. Member states must consider these goals urgent and essential to help women and girls overcome poverty, exclusion, and vulnerability to reach their potential as valued members of society.

¹ **E/CN.6/2023/L.3** Innovation and technological change, and education in the digital age for achieving gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls March 20, 2023 Para 72,86(hh),86(kk)

² **E/CN.6/2023/L.3** Innovation and technological change, and education in the digital age for achieving gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls March 20, 2023 Para 61