



REVISTA

CÁTEDRA

Gender and education In África: the case choice of the choice of baccalaureate studies in Ecuatoguinean educational centers

Género y educación en África: el caso de la elección de los estudios del bachillerato en los centros educativos ecuatoguineanos

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Abstract

This research focuses on the gender and education approach in Africa, as one of the main scenarios where the difficulties of access to education are registered, prioritizing more the



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training of boys to the detriment of girls. In order to better understand this issue, the analysis is focused on the specific case of the choice of high school studies in Equatoguinean schools. There is evidence of a division of the student body when it comes to choosing the branches of the baccalaureate, with students opting for the science or technology branch, while female students opt for the arts or humanities. As for the methodological aspects, the use of descriptive research based on the quantitative method was deemed necessary. This was chosen because the object of study is expressed in percentages. The population studied is Equatorial Guinea with a representative sample made up of educational centers under study, such as the Colegio Privado Nuestra Señora de Bisila de Nkolombong; Centro Educativo Madre Catalina II; Centro Privado la Divina Pastora; INES Carlos Lwanga; INES Padre Joaquín María Sialo, all in the city of Bata (mainland). And, the Nostradamus Private Center of the city of Malabo (insular part). One of the main conclusions is that girls opt more for the letters branch because hypothetically, this is related to feminine stereotypes, i.e. easy. Therefore, it is recommended to the students to show their cognitive skills regardless of sex.

Keywords

Baccalaureate, educational centers, education, gender, specialty

Resumen

Esta investigación se centra en estudiar el enfoque de género y educación en África, como uno de los principales escenarios donde se registra las dificultades de acceso a la educación, priorizando más la formación de los niños en detrimento de las niñas. En este sentido, para comprender mejor esta temática, se ha centrado el análisis en el caso específico de la elección de los estudios del bachillerato en los centros educativos ecuatoguineanos. Se evidencia una división del estudiantado a la hora de elegir las ramas del bachillerato, donde los estudiantes optan por la rama de ciencias o tecnología, mientras que las estudiantes optan por las letras o humanidades. En cuanto a los aspectos metodológicos, se ha visto necesario el uso de la investigación descriptiva basada en el método cuantitativo. Ésta se ha elegido porque el objeto de estudio se plasma en porcentajes. La población estudiada es Guinea Ecuatorial con una muestra representativa constituida por centros educativos objetos de estudio, como el Colegio Privado Nuestra Señora de Bisila de Nkolombong; Centro Educativo Madre Catalina II; Centro Privado la Divina Pastora; INES Carlos Lwanga; INES Padre Joaquín María Sialo todos de la ciudad de Bata (parte continental). Y, el Centro Privado Nostradamus de la ciudad de Malabo (parte insular). Una de las principales conclusiones es que las chicas optan más por la rama letras porque hipotéticamente, ésta se relaciona con estereotipos femeninos, es decir, lo fácil. Por lo tanto, se recomienda al estudiantado mostrar sus aptitudes cognitivas sin importar el sexo.

Palabras clave

Bachillerato, centros educativos, educación, género, especialidad.

1. Introduction

The purpose of this study is to show how the gender perspective influences high school students in Equatorial Guinea when they opt for the branches of study offered by the educational system of this country, such as Humanities, Science and Technology. Each of these fields of study clearly shows the preferences of one or the other according to gender.



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As in other areas, such as social, economic, political or cultural, the educational context has not been exempt from the inequalities that exist between men and women, which allow the masculine to be seen as the most perfect to the detriment of the feminine.

If gender marks the differences of what each society considers to be for men and women, the school as an agent of socialization tends to reproduce these same patterns of behavior assumed by the culture in which they are carried out.

In Africa, the proportion of women in primary education is 60% compared to 68% for men. In secondary education, the proportion is 11% for women and 21% for men. The exit of women from school in the middle and upper reaches is very high, due to early marriage, pregnancy, need to help or take care of household chores, performance of paid activities, subsistence agricultural work, water and firewood collection, care of younger siblings, etc. (Herrera-Santana et al., 2017, p. 119).

The problem of this research thus lies in the division that exists between girls and boys when it comes to choosing the branches of study of the baccalaureate. Although the Equatoguinean educational system is the result of the colonial education introduced by the Spaniards during their occupation of Spanish Guinea, there is still a clear division in the educational field, with girls opting more for the humanities, which they consider easier and more gender-specific, while science and technology are more difficult for men.

Taking into account that the choice of the branches of study of the baccalaureate involves several factors such as the vocation of the students themselves, the influence of peers or the existence of social references, gender is very accentuated in this whole question.

According to Bidaurratzaga-Aurre (2012) estimates that:

The factors of gender, income and location often combine with others related to language, ethnicity or different types of disabilities, generating a set of barriers that hinder the entry into the formal education system of the most vulnerable groups (p. 35).

The phenomenon of analysis of this study leads us to defend the following thesis: Despite the initiatives undertaken at the social level to achieve gender equality in all areas, in education still remain gender stereotypes that lead students to opt for a particular branch according to their gender, so that girls are more inclined to the humanities or social sciences, while boys are of technology or science.

Education in African educational systems faces many precariousnesses, as higher education is not always guaranteed, especially for girls. Those who succeed must face stereotypes of all kinds disseminated by the patriarchal structure of their societies. This study is positioned as an answer to understanding the division that exists in high school between girls and boys when it comes to choosing the different routes.

The school is not an isolated entity from society, so it tends to reproduce the patterns of behavior that are installed in it. This happens especially in precarious educational systems where there is no deep analysis of it. That is why, sometimes, adolescents have many difficulties to finish high school. Moreover, it is not an isolated fact that "some young women fear being considered 'unfeminine' if they pursue a university career 'for men' or if they excel too much in masculine subjects" (Barmeosolo-Beltrán, 2010, p. 97). This argument is



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what sometimes leads girls to always be in the humanities or social sciences, they seem to be in a sempiternal status quo, as is the case in Equatoguinean schools.

Based on the above, the research questions posed in this article are: does gender influence the choice of baccalaureate studies? is the humanities branch more chosen by girls? why are the science and technology branches considered as a particular choice for boys? what are the employment difficulties faced by girls?

The theoretical framework of this subject is very little developed, especially at the national level. However, the existence of an international literature is what allows an approach to a holistic understanding of the influence of gender on the choice of branches of study of high school students, based on the analysis of schools in Equatorial Guinea.

The methodology used is fundamentally descriptive. The reasons for the choice of this methodology are numerous. First, it is the one best suited to this type of study and, secondly, because, according to Tamayo and Tamayo (2003), descriptive research is that which "involves the description, recording, analysis and interpretation of the actual nature, composition or processes of phenomena. The focus that is made on conclusions is dominant, or how a person, group or thing, leads to functions in the present" (p. 54). Therefore, this research best fits the methodology stated *ut supra*.

According to the internal structure of this article, it is divided into sections: in section 1, introduction where the reasons for the research are explained; section 2, literature review on the subject under study for its justification and theoretical foundation; section 3, defense of the thesis that is carried out; section 4, description of the methodology and the analysis and discussion of the results, finally there are the main conclusions, the limits and future lines that are opened with this research.

2. Literature review

The issue of education in Africa is not a trivial one, just as it is not to consider that gender is currently present in the analysis of education. In African countries, education systems seem to be even more complex because they represent watertight projects that do not benefit the majority of their populations. Therefore, it can be said that the fight against illiteracy continues to be a necessary task in Africa because of "the existence of 77% female illiteracy, compared to 51% male illiteracy" (Sanz-Martin, 2011, pp. 62-63).

For this purpose, implementing gender equality policies in education is one of the commitments of the leaders of the African Union. Evidence of this is the following regulations: the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (2003), the Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality in Africa (2004) and the African Women's Decade 2010-2020 proclaimed in 2009, among others. All of this is aimed at achieving inclusive education.

In this regard, African education systems have emerged in imitation of Western countries, their former metropolises, as happened in Equatorial Guinea, which ended up imitating or badly plagiarizing the Spanish education system, even though they are two totally different countries.

As pointed out by Sanz-Martín (2011)

In Africa, the proportion of women in primary education is 60% compared to 68% for men. In secondary education, the ratio is 11% for



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females and 21% for males. The exit of women from school in middle and upper secondary education is very low in Africa due to early marriage, pregnancy, the need to help or take care of household chores, performance of paid activities, subsistence agricultural work, collection of water and firewood, care of younger siblings, etc. (p. 63).

Therefore:

This situation leads to illiteracy, with very serious consequences, so much so that they can endanger the lives of those who suffer from it. They will live in more desperate poverty and in a worse state of health than those who have access to the competencies, skills and abilities provided by education (Sanz Martín, 2011, pp. 62-63).

It is not even easy to carry out a comparative analysis within the African education systems themselves, as they are heterogeneous in all respects. At the international level, there is really little interest in studies related to education in Africa. Therefore, the theoretical framework of this issue is difficult to access.

Nevertheless, the studies cited in this research highlight the need to apply the gender approach in African educational policies. That is the real sense in which this research is oriented. Before talking about digital or virtual education, there is still a large number of children who do not even have desks to write on. Education is not static, but it continues to be a privilege for a few. Evidently, it is a right that can be guaranteed to all people, but if it is not supported by public policies that are inclusive of all, then we will have a large part of the population with a low level of education, with the majority being women.

The term gender was reserved “to designate the cultural elaboration of the feminine and the masculine” (Maquieira, 2001, pp.127-190). Nor is it limited to the biological differences that exist between men and women. Its presence goes beyond, it is imprinted in the very structure of societies. It is a matter of abandoning veteropatriarchal schemes in education in order to form free men and women where their aptitudes are the starting point of everything, distancing ourselves from any hint of discrimination solely on the basis of sex.

The transformation of educational systems is still necessary, but even more so where living conditions are difficult and the gender gap that exists in education is visible. It should be recognized, therefore, that “the issue is complex, as it seeks not only women's access to higher education, but also to transform the social conditions that have kept them subordinated” (Zapata and Ayala, 2014, p. 7). Education must first be educated recognizing that girls have not always been given the same prominence as boys. Gender stereotypes and sexist behaviors have collapsed education; however, in a world more open to equality policies, that type of thinking is now obsolete. Nevertheless, it is worth recognizing that more challenges remain. In general, the baccalaureate corresponds to a stage of higher education, i.e. the prelude to university studies, where students must choose the field of study in which they are most interested or where they see themselves as most qualified.

Objectively, the choice is voluntary, but one cannot avoid thinking that it is conditioned by the students' perspectives on their social context. Thus, for example, girls choose the social sciences or the humanities, while boys opt for the natural and health sciences, or in their case, engineering.

A wide variety of studies have demonstrated the gender differences that originate in relation to the preferences shown by the various opinions



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that must be chosen at the end of compulsory studies. It has been pointed out that girls mostly choose the Humanities and Social Sciences Baccalaureate, while boys are in the majority in the technological option (Rodríguez-Menéndez et al., 2006, p. 240).

With this way of understanding education, the conditions of access or choice will always be biased and collapsed. This prevents the existence of a real principle of equality, at least in this context, because “when mathematics, physics or chemistry are called ‘hard sciences’, they would be somehow assimilated to the ‘masculine’, while literary or artistic expression would be a ‘feminine’ field-although certain disciplines more than others” (Morgade, 2001, p. 59). The baccalaureate comprises the first and second year, where students are trained in the area that they will later broaden with university studies. There is a historically widespread fear, probably to keep girls out of science careers, that they are seen as difficult because they require a lot of thinking. Evidence of this is that there is very little female presence in engineering or technology careers, precisely because many girls are discouraged from high school and accept the status quo of the humanities.

The different mechanisms or actions aimed at implementing an education based on the principles of equality are still a great challenge in the world. In underdeveloped areas such as Africa, schooling is a privilege. Studying is not an option because living conditions are very low and education is highly privatized with exorbitant economic costs. Although many countries declare themselves open to policies of equality in education, this is still far from being a tangible reality. In fact, “(...) it is not enough to declare equal treatment, when in reality there is no equality of opportunity” (Begné, 2011, p. 14). We are witnessing a condition that is highly institutionalized because the difficulties in education are not trivial, but are due to the same socio-cultural structure of each context. It is no coincidence that there is a division in the choice of fields of study in higher education, and that the tendency is always for women to end up studying the so-called easy sciences, which include the humanities. Outside any Western context, education is an area where the female presence is very low, Africa itself is an example of this, where social inequalities only aggravate this situation.

Despite pointing out in this research that gender is one of the factors influencing the choice of branches of study in higher education, it is actually not the only factor. However, it must be recognized that the patriarchal system of several African societies, such as Equatoguinean society, makes gender the main factor that greatly influences education. In other words, the fact that you are a girl makes you more likely to fail in school, as opposed to what happens with boys.

Following the previous approach, Meena (2009) affirms that:

Gender is another relevant factor of inequality; especially in higher education in the sub-Saharan area. The most prominent aspects influencing gender disparity are: social and cultural norms; poverty; domestic chores; distance between home and school; lack of female role models in education; lack of professional ethics; and the tension between formal and religious education (p. 103).

All of the above aspects help to perpetuate inequalities in the field of education, where most African education systems are confronted with this reality. The need for public funding is evident; however, there are still major obstacles to solving this issue. Gender and education



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are two issues that are present in all education systems, as the differences that persist in access to education are clearly visible.

3. Thesis defense

The thesis is presented as follows: *Despite the initiatives undertaken at the social level to achieve gender equality in all areas, in education still remain gender stereotypes that lead the student body to opt for a certain branch according to their gender, being so that girls are more inclined to the humanities or social sciences, while boys are technology or science.* However, one of the issues that should be clear when dealing with this kind of research is that:

Conducting an analysis of the education system from a gender approach involves paying attention to the causes and consequences of gender inequality in access and completion of studies, but also in the process and in the system as a whole (Martínez-Martín, 2015, p.74).

In Africa, in general, the gender approach is necessary in educational policies if we want to achieve a development that leaves no one behind. As indicated in the introductory part, this research focuses on the analysis of gender and education in Africa, based on the study of the choice of baccalaureate study branches in Equatoguinean schools. It is not, therefore, a study of the Equatoguinean educational system, but rather a study of how gender influences the choice of baccalaureate courses.

Equatorial Guinea is a Central African country that was colonized by Spain, gaining its independence in 1968. Education is a fundamental right guaranteed to all citizens without distinction of sex, gender, ethnicity or race, as stipulated in Article 24, paragraph 1 of the current Fundamental Law of Equatorial Guinea. It is a concept composed of two words of Latin origin, educere and educare, both of which always imply instruction or guidance to the person for their cognitive training. It should be noted that the Equatoguinean Education System has undergone several modifications, with the ultimate purpose of bringing it into line with international standards of Education Systems. As mentioned above, there is not much research on African education systems in general, so it is difficult to find a theoretical framework to show the different problems of the Equatoguinean education system. However, one of the researches carried out on this issue points out that the Equatoguinean education system “is organized in levels and modalities. There are four levels of education: preschool education, primary education, secondary education and higher education. The modalities of secondary education are the baccalaureate and vocational training” (Dyombe, 2009, p. 7).

The chosen modality is the baccalaureate, considered as the prelude to university studies or vocational or occupational training. It is a very recent modality in this educational system, so in quantitative terms we can say that it is recent, although it has been changing. All Equatoguineans must go through this modality once they have passed secondary education, which ends with the fourth year of ESBA (Compulsory Basic Secondary Education). Education in Equatorial Guinea is only compulsory and free at the primary level, although this free education is only provided in public schools, because in private schools this does not occur in this way. It is necessary to clarify this issue because it is possible to think that education is free in Equatorial Guinea.

Within this analysis, it is impossible not to highlight the fact that primary, secondary and higher education is more expensive than university studies. The National University of



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Equatorial Guinea is very cheap at the level of the Central African sub-region, a way for the Government to undertake education policies for all, because it is understood that “school education in Equatorial Guinea must take into account the socio-cultural reality of the Equatorial Guineans; the anthropological and psychological dimension of the learner must be a concern of the school” (Nguema-Nkié, 2022, p. 14).

In contrast to the approach of the previous quote, without inclusive education, based on the principles of equal access to the same rights, school education cannot result in the development of human beings. All citizens must have access to education and it is the job of governments to guarantee this right. Not having sufficient income to pay for schooling should not prevent people from being educated, because at all times public institutions must assume their role of facilitating access to education for all social strata. In many parts of the world there are problems in terms of access to education; however, it must also be acknowledged that:

On the African continent, access to higher education is limited for the majority of citizens, but Sub-Saharan Africa is the region with the lowest gross enrollment rate in higher education in the world (5%) (UNESCO, 2009, p. 8).

Higher education cannot take place if not even primary education, the most fundamental education, has been guaranteed. Now, to return to the question of the choice of the branches of study in Equatoguinean schools, it is essential to understand the notion of the baccalaureate, i.e. how it functions in this educational system. The baccalaureate is a two-year course of study: the first and second year of the baccalaureate. In other words, in the context of the Equatoguinean context:

The baccalaureate has as its objective the humanistic and technical training that allows the student to join the productive work, to integrate socially and to be oriented to continue higher studies. This modality has four options which are the four branches of studies: Science, Humanities, Technology and Arts. All the branches have core, elective and specific subjects; let's see it: *Core subjects: Spanish language, French language, social-civic formation, physical education and sports, etc. *Electives: English language, religion, music, vernacular languages, etc. *Specific: Mathematics, physics, chemistry and drawing in the branch of Science and Technology and Latin, Greek, philosophy, history of art in the branch of Humanities (Dyombe, 2009, p. 8).

Generally, in Equatorial Guinea, the most common way of referring to the branches of study of the baccalaureate is to speak of sciences and letters, which is the most common way of referring to the branches of study of the baccalaureate. Depending on the needs or influences of all kinds, students choose one of the options. Traditionally, the branch of science is by antonomasia the space occupied by boys, while the letters are occupied by girls. This is a distribution where gender becomes one of the components of the choice of branches, because the very veteropatriarchal structure imposed or rooted in society allows it, since there is an erroneous conception that makes one think that letters are the field where girls would perform better because they are easy, while future engineers, mathematicians or physicists are for men due to their rigorousness that requires mental aptitudes that girls lack. This thinking is the result of the way society is structured and, based on this, a curriculum is also designed to expel girls from the sciences.



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Legally there are no obstacles in access to careers, but even today there are still differential socialization processes that lead to a "masculine mystique" or an "androcentric bias" in science, induce optimal curricular itineraries for male and female students and finally influence career development and professional transitions (Santana Vega, Feliciano García, and Jiménez Llanos, 2012, p. 360.)

It is observed that gender influences this choice of fields of study. In general, girls are more likely to study the arts and boys the sciences. The reasons for this fact are diverse, but it cannot be ignored that gender stereotypes contribute greatly to perpetuating girls in the arts, because socioculturally it is understood that women cannot handle difficult subjects such as mathematics, physics and chemistry. This is a very deep-rooted thought in the Equatoguinean context and that is why there are, at least in this context, few women working in the more empirical sciences. But this does not only happen at the baccalaureate level, but also at the university level. This argument should not be understood as a postulate that there is little female presence in Equatoguinean educational centers. In fact, if we compare it with other countries in the subregion, education in Equatorial Guinea is guaranteed to girls. According to UNESCO data (2012) "parity is found in States such as Cameroon, Central African Republic or Equatorial Guinea" (pp. 30-31). However, this does not imply that African education systems are not weak, because sector funding and resources for access to education are limited.

Inclusive education is necessary, but it must also aim to end the gender stereotypes that prevent many girls from accessing education in many African countries. There are many arguments why girls' education must be guaranteed. However, the most striking one is presented by UNESCO (2014) when it emphasizes that "if all women in sub-Saharan Africa completed primary education, the maternal mortality rate would be reduced by 70%, from 500 to 150 deaths per 100,000 births" (p. 2). This would occur because women would be trained and educated to face situations that can only be faced with the knowledge provided by education.

The case of the choice of branches of study in the baccalaureate cannot include a female mass if the policies of empowerment or emancipation of women are not carried out, because the intentions are necessary, but even more so the implementation of this. Equatorial Guinea, like other African countries, must implement in its educational centers mechanisms that guarantee that girls can choose the branch of studies because they are really qualified for it, and not be obstructed to develop their cognitive potentialities because the socio-cultural environment prevents them from doing so.

The Equatoguinean education system depends on the Ministry of Education and University Education, which implements the Government's education policy. It is fundamentally based on two educational laws: Education Law No. 14/1995 dated January 9, 1995 and Law No. 5/2007 dated October 30, 2007, both of which have been amended, all with the purpose of guaranteeing education for all, although the materialization of this also depends on the degree of pedagogical, anthropological and sociological competence of those responsible for these laudable policies of the Government.

Despite educational initiatives to provide inclusive and quality education, Equatoguinean schools still have to make great efforts to train teachers to implement inclusive strategies and motivate students, which also helps them to be self-confident and be able to choose the career they want to study. Therefore, it must be recognized that "many higher education



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institutions have initiated processes to institutionalize and mainstream the gender perspective and promote changes in favor of equality in university communities, inequalities remain, if not intact, then with a strong presence” (Buquet Corleto, 2016, p. 43).

The issue is not exclusively of university communities, but all educational communities, although in this case we focus only on the secondary level in the baccalaureate modality. Clearly, inequalities still remain, as discussed in the methodological section of this research. The data on how gender influences educational systems in Africa, especially in the central zone of sub-Saharan Africa where Equatorial Guinea is located, reveal the following:

Women's enrollment is concentrated in studies related to education and health, social sciences and humanities, with little presence in engineering studies. A representative example of this African reality is Madagascar, where the participation of women in education is 66%, in health 46% and in social sciences and humanities 25% (Akkari, 2011, p. 152).

These data can be perfectly extrapolated to Equatorial Guinea as an African country, where the health field is more represented by women, in general terms, the female presence is more present in the social sciences and humanities. This phenomenon does not occur randomly, it is not only due to the baccalaureate, which is the modality that gives access to university studies, but it is mainly due to the way in which Equatoguinean society conceives men and women. In this case, from the sociocultural point of view, men are seen as superior to women, which is why, even if women also have access to studies, they are not taken seriously, and if they are, they are entrenched in the humanities, because there they can perform better, while men are the ones who deal with the more difficult branches of science. That is precisely why, when a girl masters mathematics in class, she is considered a boy because socially it is not understood that this is possible. Although social postulates on this issue have been changing, invisible obstacles still persist, due to the strong influence of patriarchal thinking that rewards the masculine to the detriment of the feminine, in such a context it is impossible for an egalitarian education to exist.

In the same order of arguments that have been presented in this research on gender and its influence on education in the African context, without specifications of any specific country, Wabgou (2019) emphasizes that:

In Africa, the gender relationship must be taken into account in the implementation of higher education policies in order to propel gender equity policies in higher education with a differential approach between rural and urban areas (...) The education of boys and girls is conditioned by their sex; the boy expands his spaces while the girl, confined to the domestic space, is limited to the performance of specific tasks that make her the subject of social practices anchored in subjugating traditions (Wabgou, 2019, p. 107).

It is imperative, not only in the Equatoguinean education system, but also in other education systems in Africa, to implement public policies for gender equality in education, so that boys and girls have the same opportunities in this field as in any other. Otherwise, there is a risk that many girls will remain illiterate, not only because the economic resources of their families do not allow them to do so, but also because the State has not implemented practical plans to ensure inclusive education.



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Educational conditions are very precarious and access to education is impossible for a large part of the population. This is obviously an issue of great concern in Africa. However, corruption and other facts prevent the achievement of inclusive education. There is still a long way to go to make academia free of gender stereotypes. In some African countries such as Equatorial Guinea, education is seen as the main driver for development. The problem is always in putting into practice everything that is on paper. Girls still find it difficult to gain access to higher education once they have finished high school. Thus, most of the time, girls' lives revolve around marriage and household chores. As a result, not as much is invested in their education and although African governments make efforts to empower women, there are still places where it is difficult for them to enjoy the right to a decent and guaranteed education.

Education has become so commodified, which has also accelerated its privatization, something that prevents many families from sending their sons and daughters to school, because public schools are too few to take on the entire student body. In theory, men and women study on an equal footing, but as long as there are branches of study where the female presence is scarce, not because of lack of knowledge but because they are women, it is still difficult to solve this issue *ipso facto*. According to Martínez-Martín (2015) it must be understood that:

Education should not remain on the sidelines of the debates on equity and social justice, therefore it is an important strategy of feminist action against the dominant logics, where empowerment, critical awareness, freedom, equality, emancipation, the creation of collective and community networks are fundamental aspects of this thinking, becoming engines of real change (p. 75).

To think that there is a geographical context that does not need to implement inclusive policies in the field of education is a way of trying to deny this issue. The right to education is guaranteed in Equatorial Guinea, and at the primary and secondary levels there is a certain parity. The problem begins at the high school level when it comes to choosing the branches of study, where one begins to appreciate the way in which gender influences these choices.

After the baccalaureate is the university, which is part of higher education, where women are not banned, at least in the Equatoguinean context, but they are entrenched in the social sciences or humanities. This means that it is a continuity of what begins in the baccalaureate. If one wants to change, it is considered that one should start not necessarily in the baccalaureate, but rather the entire educational system to make it more inclusive. It should be emphasized that "higher education institutions produce and reproduce their own culture, of which gender is a fundamental element" (Palomar, 2005, p. 28). Boys and girls should have equal access to education, but it is precisely the place where they should be educated with a gender perspective, i.e. recognizing that aptitudes should be enhanced. The African context needs many educational improvements so that education is not a privilege of a few. The precarious situation of education in Africa is evident, but:

It cannot be denied that the sub-Saharan States have made serious efforts to achieve the Millennium Development Goals and the Education for All Goals, especially with regard to gender equality in education. However, these have not been achieved despite the commitments made at the beginning of this century. Very low enrollment rates in higher education



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persist in Sub-Saharan Africa and gender inequality remains very prominent (González Pérez and Ledesma Reyes, 2015, p. 175).

Gender inequality is, as we pointed out earlier, an obstacle to women's access to higher education. Although the number of girls enrolled in the baccalaureate is high, as will be observed when presenting the data of this research, there is still work to be done so that women's access to engineering studies continues to be possible. From this initial phase, which we call baccalaureate because it is the prelude to university studies, progress must be made in improving both the school curriculum and the teaching staff itself, because "one of the most important challenges facing Higher Education Institutions (...) almost everywhere in the world, is to eradicate the gender inequality that is still manifested and reproduced within them" (Ordorika, 2015, p. 7). Throughout the corpus of this research, it is accentuated that gender inequality exists in many educational systems, therefore, the same occurs within the Equatoguinean educational system. Precisely, it is important to work from this area to put an end to this phenomenon that prevents several women from accessing higher education, and that the baccalaureate that corresponds to them is mostly in letters because they are women.

Letters and sciences, as the baccalaureate options are called in Equatorial Guinea, are designed so that each student chooses the branch of study where he or she is best suited, but in reality it is not always a voluntary option, but access to letters is for girls, it is designed for them, because they are conceived as an easy educational field. That is precisely why there are very few boys studying the baccalaureate in literature, just as there are very few girls studying the baccalaureate in science in the Equatoguinean education system. The current conditions of the educational centers of the Equatoguinean society require pedagogical criteria aimed at promoting inclusive education. It is necessary to enhance the aptitudes of the student body, but all this must be done with a gender perspective, that is, by introducing educational policies that do not impose a kind of educational segregation based on gender.

4. Methodology

As for methodological aspects, it was necessary to use descriptive research based on the quantitative method. This was chosen because the object of study is expressed as a percentage. With the quantitative research method, the approaches to be investigated are specific and delimited within the study. Within this methodology, it is important to consider the population and the sample. The population is Equatorial Guinea and the sample is made up of the selected educational centers.

In the sample, the students of the different centers have participated, namely: Our Lady of Bisila de Nkolombong Educational Center; Mother Catherine II Educational Center; Divine Shepherdess Private Center; Carlos Lwanga INES; Father Joaquin Maria Sialo INES, all from the city of Bata (mainland). And the Nostradamus Private Center of the city of Malabo (insular part). It should be noted that this is a representative sample because it includes the centers with the largest number of students in the country.

4.1. Analysis and discussion of results

At this stage of the research, the sampling is probabilistic and simple random by the random selection of 50 high school students in each school. Therefore, the sample consisted of 300 students equally divided between 150 boys and 150 girls chosen at random.



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The technique used was the personal survey, and the instrument used was the questionnaire. The closed questions were formulated taking into account the sex of the students.

		Frequency	Percentage	Valid percentage
Valid	Science	73	48.6%	48.6%
	Technology	14	9.3%	9.3%
	Humanities	63	42.1%	42.1%
	Total	150	100%	100%

Table 1. In which branch of the baccalaureate are you?

Analysis: With a total of 150 boys surveyed, 48.6% are in Science, 9.8% in Technology and, finally, 42.1% in Humanities.

Interpretation: The result of that first question reveals that boys are more representative in the Science strand. That choice is due to the social aspects of where a real boy has to be in the Science stream. So, very few have actually specified the reason for their choice in the Science branch. As for the Humanities, well, the reason has been that the subjects do not go well for that reason have chosen the branch of letters.

		Frequency	Percentage	Valid percentage
Vaqlid	Science	67	44.6%	44.6%
	Technology	58	38.6%	38.6%
	Humanities	25	16.8%	16.8%
	Total	150	100%	100%

Table 2 What is the most difficult branch?

Analysis: 44.6% have marked Science, 38.6% have marked Technology and lastly, 16.8% of the boys surveyed have marked Humanities.

Interpretation: After obtaining the results, it can be said that the respondents were mostly inclined towards science and technology. For them, science subjects are more difficult. And boys, because of their stereotypes, are the ones who identify more with the difficult. Thus, many of the boys surveyed consider the two aforementioned fields to be more difficult than the humanities.



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		Frequency	Percentage	Valid percentage
Valid	YES	103	68.6%	68.6%
	NO	47	31.4%	31.4%
	Total	150	100%	100%

Table 3. Do you think that the choice of baccalaureate studies depends on gender?

Analysis: The 150 boys surveyed gave us the following results: 68.8% answered yes to the question; the rest, 31.4%, said the opposite.

Interpretation: The question asked here allows us to see and analyze whether students relate gender to branch choice. And, of course, many have this perspective or vision. The impact of the social environment is evident since, in Equatoguinean society, in the educational field, boys are the ones who opt for the sciences and girls opt for the other branch namely the Humanities.

Phase 2 of this research is presented below. As stated in previous points, the research questions are the same, but they have been grouped according to the gender of the students. In other words, the same questions have been answered by both boys and girls. The purpose of these independent phases is to measure the degree of consideration that the students have about the question of the choice of the branches at the baccalaureate level.

		Frequency	Percentage	Valid percentage
Valid	Science	71	47.3%	47.3%
	Technology	15	10%	10%
	Humanities	64	42.7%	42.7%
	Total	150	100%	100%

Table 4. In what branch of the baccalaureate are you?

Analysis: Of the 150 girls surveyed, 47.3% are in Science, 10% in Technology and 42.7% in Humanities.

Interpretation: In response to this question, the girls claimed that humanities is the branch for girls. It is not specified in this question why they say so. But it is clear that, in the Equatoguinean school society, most of the girls or young women choose the Humanities. Although it is estimated that many of them do so out of mimicry, that is, because they always want to be among friends regardless of the career that each one.



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		Frequency	Percentage	Valid percentage
Valid	Science	94	62.6%	62.6%
	Technology	18	12%	12%
	Humanities	38	25.4%	25.4%
	Total	150	100%	100%

Table 5. Which is the most difficult branch?

Analysis: Among the 150 girls surveyed, it is worth noting that 62.6% recognize that the Science branch is the most difficult, while others, representing 12%, believe that it is the Technology branch, and the rest, in a percentage of 25.4%, believe that it is the Humanities.

Interpretation: Many of the girls in the Equatoguinean education system opt for the Humanities when they arrive in the first year of the baccalaureate. In other words, they turn away from science because they consider it too difficult. For them, it is a matter of boys doing mathematics, chemistry and physics. For them, Greek and Latin as specific subjects of the Humanities are very easy subjects, and this is a peculiar characteristic of girls. However, it is observed that the careers they choose to study at the university, which in the Equatoguinean context are practically considered as careers for girls, are medicine, administration, banking and finance, among others, which identify girls as purely science careers. Thus, we are faced with a dialectic in which girls consider that the branch of science is the most difficult, but that the university opportunities in this branch are the most coveted by girls.

		Frequency	Percentage	Valid percentage
Valid	YES	111	74%	74%
	NO	39	26%	26%
	Total	150	100%	100%

Table 6. Do you think that the choice of baccalaureate studies depends on gender?

Analysis: With a total of 150 girls surveyed, 74% answered Yes, while the rest, i.e. 26% said No, and the remaining 26% said No.

Interpretation: As we have seen in relation to boys, it is almost the same thinking. When it comes to choosing a field in the baccalaureate, young women are more inclined to choose the Humanities because it is hypothetically said that this field is for girls.

5. Conclusions

After having conducted this research on education and gender in Africa, taking as a case study the choice of branches of study at the baccalaureate level within the Equatoguinean education system, the following conclusions were reached:



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- In the first place, girls opt for the arts because, hypothetically, it is related to feminine stereotypes, i.e., what is easy.
- Secondly, in the Equatoguinean educational system, there are more girls in the humanities or arts than in science and technology.
- Then, it is still thought that girls or women cannot become engineers, mechanical technicians, etc. because they are professions that clearly define boys. Women identify more with careers such as administration, journalism, and cashiering, among others.
- Another relevant conclusion is the influence of social, family and cultural factors that have repercussions on the academic future of girls, among which are pregnancy, sexual harassment, marriage, etc.

It should be remembered that the planned thesis is as follows: *Despite the initiatives undertaken at the social level to achieve gender equality in all areas, in education still remain gender stereotypes that lead the student body to opt for a particular branch according to their gender, being so that girls are more inclined to the humanities or social sciences, while boys are technology or science.* Based on this thesis, it should be emphasized that education should be a right for all people regardless of gender, sex or race, something that is not currently defined in the education system. In a society rooted in the stale values of patriarchy, it is still thought that boys are the most qualified for certain careers. Stereotypes are created that psychologically block girls from accessing careers or fields of study that are considered masculine. To combat this scourge of inequality, educational policies with a gender perspective have been undertaken to strengthen the educational institutions themselves, investing in teacher training so that they do not imprint sexist divisions in the school.

The answers to the research questions illustrated how gender influences the choice of baccalaureate studies. In fact, many girls opt for the humanities while boys opt for science and technology. However, science and technology are considered to be particularly linked to boys because they are associated with the stereotype of being difficult, arduous and hard. At the labor level, girls or women have difficulties because of their condition. And, it is a fact that men put women in an inferior position despite gender-inclusive policies.

However, with the passage of time this situation is taking other aspects. The baccalaureate is a phase where students must show their cognitive aptitudes regardless of gender. To this end, it is necessary to avoid conditioning the choice of careers according to gender.

One of the limitations of this research was not having found a previous study that analyzes the current Equatoguinean educational system from a gender perspective. This shows that no attention has been paid to it. In this sense, for future research, it would be possible to study the factors or phenomena that make it difficult for girls to access certain careers, especially the more technical ones. Moreover, we could also study whether women who have managed to break through these obstacles are being references for girls who would also like to be like them. Inclusive education is the best option for advancing development.

This work is part of the framework of gender research in Equatorial Guinea. It is not a vindication of women's rights, nor is it even a feminist position to defend women. It is rather an analysis of the gender situation in relation to the Equatoguinean educational system. Therefore, this work does not exhaust the gender issue in education, but rather opens the door to other research of this nature, it would be here as a kind of theoretical framework at the national level.



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PEDRO BAYEME BITUGA-NCHAMA: Literature review, thesis defense, search of bibliographic sources, methodology, related concepts, organization and integration of collected data, review and correction of the first and last remarks of the Journal.

BONIFACIO NGUEMA OBIANG-MIKUE: Abstract, related concepts, methodology, analysis and discussion of the results, search of the bibliographic sources, organization and integration of the collected data revision and correction of the first and last remarks of the Journal.

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