Empowering Women through Education in Conakry (Republic of Guinea)

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Abstract:
The purpose of this research is to understand the impact of education and programs on the development of women in Guinea. It is based on a qualitative approach. To achieve this objective, a first reading of the relevant documents (programme brochures, preparation booklets, progress plan, distribution of programmes, manuals) was conducted. Our study then focused on the impact of literacy programs on the improvement of the intellectual and professional capacities of Guinean women in Conakry. Another, richer reading, of an analytical type, invites an overall appreciation of the theories to define the significant aspects related to the theme and to make an interpretation of them. From the perspective of this approach, we felt that a more reasonable way to see how literacy can increase women's participation in socio-economic and environmental life. The results made it possible to understand that education is a channel for conveying the knowledge necessary for the development of Guinean women and the increase of their intellectual and professional capacities.

Keywords: Education, literacy, gender, development

Introduction

Given the transversal nature of gender, its consideration is not limited to eliminating disparities between sexes in education but integrates the specific and practical needs of men and women. The needs, constraints, and opportunities of each must be analyzed to ensure equality and equity for all. According to the World Bank in 2018, Guinea's total population was 12,414,318 compared to 3,494,162 in 1960, with an annual growth rate of 2.83% in 2018. The fertility rate per woman in 2018 was 4.70, down from 6.11 in 1960. As BALDE (2011, p. 5) notes, "In the early days of Guinea's independence, political leaders attributed the subordinate status of African women to colonization and colonizers." The Democratic Party of Guinea reiterated: "It took colonial intervention and its shameful practices of oppression and exploitation to distort the social role of women, leading to an unacceptable disqualification that their liberation must completely eliminate" (TOURE in HANRY, 1970, p. 58).

In any case, the status of women was redefined in 1962 and 1968, coinciding with two educational reforms in 1961 and 1968. Despite these reforms, there is a clear contrast between declared political intentions and the results achieved on the ground after multiple literacy campaigns. Guinean women, although they participated alongside men in the country's liberation struggles and acquired excellent organizational skills at the local and community levels, remain underrepresented in important decision-making bodies. DIALLO (Amina, 2000, No. 364, p. 3) highlights MONENEMBO's idea that "Guinean independence owes more to the bravery of Guinean women than to the pathological verbosity of the national elite." Women also manage families by making critical decisions. They not only handle household tasks but also resolve conflicts and foster the social cohesion necessary for Guinean society's development. "Women, who make up 51% of the population, are involved in all socio-economic activities of the country, both in the formal and informal sectors. They are on the verge of becoming the driving force of economic and social de-

velopment" (AENF, 2000, p. 6).

The 1962 convention called on all states to formulate policies promoting equal opportunities at all levels of the educational system, and the 1981 convention reiterated the need to provide equal access to education for women (UNICEF, 1992). More recently, the World Conference on Education for All, held in Jomtien (Thailand) in 1990, emphasized the need to ensure access to education for all children. The culmination of this commitment was the National Forum on Basic Education held in Dakar from April 26 to 28, 2000, which announced a new United Nations initiative for girls to reduce the gap between boys and girls in primary and secondary education (UNICEF, 1992).

Many sub-Saharan states, following the recommendations of these conventions and conferences, have made significant efforts to reduce gender disparities in education by adopting laws on equal access to the education system. Since its independence on October 2, 1958, Guinea has placed great importance on education and training as instruments of economic, social, and cultural development. Over the past ten years, numerous strategies have been adopted in Guinea in the form of political reforms and programs at the primary education level, particularly for girls' schooling. Major development institutions such as the World Bank, USAID, and French Cooperation have supported the educational reform program known as PASE, launched in 1990. A series of strategies and policies have been developed and implemented to address education issues in Guinea.

1.1. Problem Statement

Indeed, institutional, legal, and administrative efforts have been made to transform the political condition of women. For example, under the First Republic, women were organized within the URFG, with its leaders integrated into the party's decision-making bodies and assuming significant roles. A Guinean woman, Jeanne Martin CISSE, was the first woman to chair the United Nations Security Council. Despite these achievements, these measures have not radically changed their status. More than five decades after independence, women participate only minimally in the country's political structures, even though their participation in political parties during elections is considerable. With the establishment of multiparty politics, national observers note that women's situation in the political sphere has regressed significantly. Across political parties, women are underrepresented in leadership roles, often confined to tasks such as event organization and electoral campaigning. Similar discrimination exists in electoral processes, with women receiving minimal appointments to ministerial and directorial positions. In short, the political world remains profoundly male-dominated.

To date, the following indicators from MASPFE (2013, p. 4) allow us to assess progress: the girls/boys ratio in education is 73.3% for girls versus 83.9% for boys in primary education, and 22.8% for girls versus 32.7% for boys in secondary education. In higher education, the rate increased from 16.5% for girls in 2009 to 20% in 2013, compared to 84.36% for boys. The literacy rate for women aged 15 and older is 18%, compared to 10% for men. Regarding girls' education, emphasis must be placed on certain parental behaviors rooted in tradition and customs. Games remain strongly gendered. A girl playing with a ball might be told: "Go play with a doll or learn to cook rice with mud, because that's a boy's role, and you're not a boy." Social control is exerted on parents who allow their children to deviate from these norms. In Guinea, a common phenomenon is "Khoumudy," where a person with many children entrusts one to a family member (brother, sister, mother, cousin, or friend) who lacks children. This practice affects both boys and girls but predominantly young girls.

Moreover, guardians rarely question the treatment of their "protected" children. Comments such as: "I think you're lucky to be with me because you haven't seen anything yet in terms of chores. When I was your age, I did double or triple what you do now. You haven't seen anything," are common, as reported by one respondent. Regardless of the affection shown to Guinean girls, one thing is certain: from a certain age, they are required to participate in or solely handle household chores, sometimes becoming street vendors. This phenomenon affects girls more than boys, who are more often reserved for school. Some girls protest, saying: "Why is it always me who has to do this work while my brother is either at school, on a football field, or locked in his room doing nothing?" In most cases, the girl is quickly put in her place, as this is how things have always been. Most families that allow their daughters to be educated have a high level of education themselves. Girls' schooling is also hindered by the population's low income and the cost of education. Many parents believe that school involves long, exhausting cycles and sometimes operates contrary to moral values. The national report on the implementation of global and African platforms, presented at the 7th African Regional Conference on Women, provides significant data on education and training.

Regarding women's education and training, several strategies have been implemented to improve Guinean women's education and training. The government has ensured gender considerations in educational policies and programs; discriminatory textbooks against girls have been revised; scholarships and incentive awards have been granted to girls; gender modules have been included in teacher training curricula; NAFA centers and professional literacy centers have been established for non-formal education. The following results were achieved: the girls' enrollment rate increased from 23% to 71% between 2006 and 2011 in Guinea; the number of NAFA centers increased to 150 functional centers with 7,000 graduates and 6,000 learners in training, 90% of whom are girls. For technical education and vocational training, from 1999 to 2011, technical and vocational training institutions in the public and

private sectors trained a total of 79,891 students, including 23,154 girls (28.9%). Among these, vocational training centers trained 33,615 students, including 1,795 girls (5.33%). In 2008, out of 1,078 teachers in public technical and vocational schools, only 78 were women (7.23%), and only two out of 35 institutions were led by women (5.71%). Regarding higher education and scientific research, Elvire MAUROUARD (2006, p. 6-7) notes that "significant measures have been taken to facilitate girls'/women's access to all higher education and research institutions: development of strategies to improve equity in access to higher education and scientific research; creation of a UNESCO Chair: 'Women-Gender-Society and Development' at the University of Conakry; admission of all female candidates in mathematical sciences to higher education institutions since the 2001 session in Guinea." The participation of girls in higher education is as follows: University of Conakry, 19.08% girls; University of Kankan, 12.36% girls; Institut Supérieur d'Agronomie et Vétérinaire de Faranah, 12.96% girls; Institut Supérieur des Mines et Géologie de Boké, 10.71% girls; ISSEG de Manéah, 1.96% girls; Centre Universitaire de Labé, 13.91% girls; Centre Universitaire de N'Zérékoré, 7.49% girls. Since 2004, new higher education institutions have been established in Guinea (Université GLC de Sonfonia in Conakry; Institut Supérieur des Arts de Guinée in Dubréka; Institut Supérieur d'Informations et de Communications in Kountia, etc.).

Thus, deliberately refusing to educate girls on par with boys or to make women as literate as men condemns them to ignorance, obscurantism, dependence, and submission to men's decisions. "The lack of training reduces women's ability to seize opportunities for developing personal, thoughtful, and sustainable initiatives. This handicap also diminishes their participation in decision-making at the family, community, or national level" (AENF, 2009, p. 8). In the study on learning opportunities in Guinea (2010, p. 19), three main reasons for girls' non-schooling are cited by parents: "lack of supervision for children, lack of financial means, and household chores (domestic, commercial, agricultural activities)." Specifically, 24% attribute non-schooling to lack of supervision, 14% to lack of means, and 7% to domestic work. The study also notes that these reasons contribute to girls' repetition and dropout rates, compounded by early marriage and harassment by male peers and teachers, issues the education system struggles to prevent and address.

In the health sector, in both rural and urban areas, populations are exposed to numerous infectious diseases such as malaria, Ebola, and STIs/HIV. Data published by the National Health Information Service in February 1999 indicate that "malaria accounts for 28% of victims in Guinea, compared to 16% for respiratory infections, 8% for diarrheal diseases, and 35% for other conditions." It is also known that awareness and education improve adults' engagement, particularly women's,

in child supervision. Similarly, other studies published in the Adult Education for Development Review No. 64 (2005, p. 180) show "a strong link between education and poverty reduction."

1.1.1. Hypotheses

a) Educational programs could contribute to reducing gender disparities. b) Literacy for Guinean women could contribute to their intellectual and professional fulfillment and increase their participation in social, political, and economic life.

1.1.2. General Objective

To understand the impact of education and programs on women's fulfillment.

1.1.3. Specific Objectives

b) Determine the impact of educational programs on improving the intellectual and professional capacities of Guinean women in Greater Conakry. c) Show how literacy can increase women's participation in social, political, and economic life.

Methodology

The objective of this work is to analyze and achieve a critical synthesis of theories related to gender fulfillment through education. To achieve this objective, an initial, brief reading of relevant documents could lead to exploring the abundant literature offered by various publications, theories, or explanatory trends by some authors on gender inequalities in access to schooling. Another, richer, analytical reading invites an overall appreciation of the theories to define significant aspects related to the theme and to interpret them in relation to literacy, the intellectual and professional growth of Guinean women, and their participation in social, political, and economic life. Beyond their convergent interest in female schooling or educational inequalities in general, these authors share the common feature of offering highly interesting literature on major works concerning schooling issues.

Following this approach, the abundance of statements, the richness of models, and the type of interpretive rhetoric we opted for led us from the outset to organize this work according to the content analysis approach inspired by Van Der Maren (1993). According to this approach, the first step in content analysis is to define the units of analysis, regardless of the chosen level of analysis. Among the three different methods for determining analysis units, we chose to define categories by analogical echo, as we did not have predefined categories and had to construct them progressively during our documentary research in line with the initial objective.

Reading the models presented in reference books allowed us to identify four main categories: "externalist approach," "historical approach," "ethnographic approach," and "conflict approach." Under these four categories, we conducted an initial grouping of all significant passages using a coding system specifying the author's name and the page serving as a reference for the passage

concerned. Taking a step back from this initial document, we succeeded in determining the type of interpretive rhetoric needed. We decided to start with an examination of a hierarchical stratification generating different choices by actors (Boudon, 1985; Cherkaoui, 1979). For these authors, schools inadvertently operate a selection favoring children from higher social categories. This eminently neoliberal approach attributes educational inequalities to factors external to educational institutions. These four stages were identified as subcategories to group all ideas expressed in this context. The post-interactive phase, recognized by many authors as a moment of reflection on action, served as a transitional element between the category devoted to the externalist approach and the reasons for gender disparities in education, which lie outside educational institutions. Thus, the causes of gender disparities in education must be sought outside these institutions. This suggests that the gender issue encompasses a vast research field, as it concerns diverse economic, social, cultural, and ideological aspects. It is also distinctly noted that the mother's attitude is a determining factor in girls' success.

Development

We will attempt here, in a series of short and precise articles, to discuss the issue of education related to gender from a critical analysis inscribed within a two-level societal theory dear to the German philosopher Jürgen Habermas: the level of the "lifeworld" and that of the "system." The "lifeworld" encompasses human activities mediated by society's structures, such as language, culture, socialization, and traditions. Its structuring and modification depend on the evolution of customs and the interpretation of social values. The "lifeworld" is the daily space of our activities. For Habermas, modern society is characterized by a "colonization of the lifeworld" by various systems. Thus, we believe that the issue of literacy through gender must be framed in terms of the relationship between "lifeworld" and "system": what connections should be established today between our "lifeworlds" and our "educational systems" to give our history (our histories) an orientation mindful of openness to oneself, others, and the world? This should be the crux of the debate.

3.1. Schooling: Scope and Limitations

The notion of schooling is rarely used outside of education, which encompasses it. For Pr J. Ki-Zerbo (1990, p. 15), "After birth, education remains. To live is to persevere in one's being. For a given society, it is through education that it perpetuates itself in its physical and social being. It is a collective birthing that extends individual biological childbirth." In contrast, E. Durkheim (1997), from a sociological perspective, defines education as the action exerted by adult generations on those not yet mature for social life. Its purpose is to stimulate and develop in the child a certain number of physical, intellectual, and moral states required by both the political society as a whole and the specific milieu for

which the child is destined. According to Ferréol (1995, p. 69): "The theme of education encompasses all social activities aimed at transmitting to individuals the collective heritage of the society in which they are integrated. Its scope includes the socialization of young children by their families, schooling received in institutions with an explicit educational purpose (schools, youth movements), or within various groups (sports associations, cultural groups, political groups). Its specification operates according to domains (be it sciences, arts, or religion)."

For clarity, the main currents or approaches used in this literature review will be grouped in the following sections.

3.2 Conflict Approach

This approach identifies the school as an ideological apparatus of the dominant class and directly links school divisions to social divisions. Authors of this trend, notably Bourdieu and Establet (1979), Daru-Bellat and Mingat (1985), attribute an inegalitarian role to the school itself, imputing it to the conflictual domination of one class over others through the school. This approach views the school as a social institution that participates in the reproduction of material and symbolic domination phenomena. It is within this trajectory that the works of Baudelot and Establet (cited by Diallo, 1996) are situated, which have the advantage of summarizing studies on girls' schooling in developing countries. The main conclusions are as follows: - Gender, after social origin, is the second dimension of a school system's architecture. Like social origin, gender plays the same role at all levels of the structure. - Equal access for girls to a given level always respects existing social inequalities. - In countries where equal access is most developed, social inequalities among girls are less pronounced than among boys. - Gaps between girls and boys decrease as social origin rises within a given society and as the wealth of a society increases. - Unlike social origin, whose effects on academic success are consistent across countries, the impact of gender has changed with the expansion of schooling. - In poor countries, schooling directly reflects the social domination of boys over girls. In wealthy countries with developed schooling, school reproduction occurs through a cross-relationship, with each sex drawing advantages or disadvantages from the social domination situation. In countries that surpass the threshold of girls' under-schooling, the game plays out similarly, with girls and boys generally having the same assets and facing the same handicaps.

In summary, "conflict" theorists emphasize what happens within the "black box" of the school, i.e., the purely school-related mechanisms through which educational inequalities are produced. According to this approach, school structures (evaluation procedures, content, and teaching methods) are responsible for educational inequalities. In the same vein, the feminist approach's philosophy rests on equality between sexes. Feminism is a social doctrine advocating the improvement and expan-

sion of women's roles and rights in society. It strongly denounces the historical subjugation of women and demands their emancipation to grant them a place equal to men in society. Feminism is thus a social and political movement, expressing a social group's demand for a general and global societal change. According to feminists, the degree of gender inequality, particularly the extent to which women are economically dependent on men, is crucial in analyzing educational inequalities between girls and boys (Ferréol, 1995).

3.3 Historical Approach

In this regard, a careful reading of the collected documents on our topic allowed us to identify useful information elements likely to shed light on our research concern. Words, expressions, figures, and facts were considered to form a body of data to be organized in light of the set objectives and expected results. The historical approach perceives a difference between the pre-colonial and post-colonial periods, explaining girls' difficulties in accessing education and their poor performance at school through the institutionalization of an inegalitarian logic between men and women and "the reinforcement of women's exclusion from public and societal spheres during colonization" (World Bank, 1995, p. 41).

According to this international organization, "before colonization, there was no difference in access to education for girls and boys. Both had the same right to education. However, what differentiated them was the purpose assigned to each sex." For example, at Koranic schools, girls were only required to learn a few surahs for prayer, while boys were expected to go as far as possible. Nonetheless, both were called to learn agriculture, the most important economic sector at the time. While this thesis is explicitly defended by the World Bank, it is also partially supported by Nodjie, Niane, Lagardère, and Diop/Kane, cited by Ndoye (2002, p. 10). According to their analysis, "the origin of girls' poor performance at school must be sought in colonial history." At that time, the legislator reinforced patriarchal and Western logic, as when girls' education was finally incorporated into the development program for indigenous communities, the type of education provided aimed to develop domestic virtues.

Indeed, "fearing that educated girls would go against the customs, traditions, and norms of traditional society" (Guido, 1997, p. 4), indigenous communities were so wary of colonial schools that most African families opposed the schooling of their children, particularly girls, arguing that women are the guardians of culture in African society. In this regard, Kaboré (1998, p. 80) observed that "since then, the schooling of African children has accentuated their specialization by gender: domestic work, sedentariness, and a more reserved attitude for girls; more outdoor life, dynamic, and active attitudes for boys, with economic means or cultural and social values used to justify this differentiation." Despite the interest of this approach, it appears from various conclusions that the issue of girls' low access to literacy

encompasses a broader research field, as it involves not only historical variables but also externalist and ethnographic variables.

3.4 Ethnographic Approach

This approach summarizes studies conducted in Guinea on gender in relation to literacy. According to Lange, cited by Kanté (2001, p. 19), "in Africa, girls' school trajectories are unique, with female students having a different perception of school than boys. Expert logics of egalitarianism (by gender), democracy, and humanitarianism do not always align with families' educational expectations." In Guinea, the evaluation of NAFA centers concluded that the NAFA approach had a significant impact on girls' education, considering the number of graduates and their integration. However, in some localities, community involvement is insufficient, leading to poorly functioning management committees, demotivated facilitators, and irregular attendance by learners. Despite differences in pedagogical practices, the authors of this study conclude that there is a strong similarity with practices in formal schools.

The Institute for Development Studies and the Ministry of Pre-University Education and Vocational Training, cited by Kanté (2001), noted in their study on primary schooling that "the dropout rate for girls is higher than for boys." For these authors, "late enrollment age for girls impacts their dropout rates." For Sow (1994, p. 76), "schooling costs are a critical factor in the decision to enroll a girl in school. When resources do not allow all children to be schooled, parents preferentially enroll boys." Indeed, it seems that girls' utility in household and domestic tasks is greater than that of boys. For this reason, Kanté (2001, p. 50) notes in her study that "due to lack of means, parents are often unable to enroll more than two children in school." In reality, schooling costs affect girls more than boys. Similarly, Bayo (2004, p. 49) showed in his study that "there is an inequality of opportunity between girls and boys for access to schooling." Children of both sexes do not receive the same treatment when it comes to literacy. The causes of these inequalities are partly rooted in the community and family. Positive discrimination in favor of boys is generated and sustained by society. Girls are primarily educated to become model wives and mothers. This author concludes that "the causes of gender disparities in the education system are located in the culture of the environment." Kanté (2001) made the same observation, noting that "within the family, parents predominantly favor male children. This parental attitude stems from the tradition and religion of the environment and significantly influences decisions regarding girls' schooling and retention in school."

3.5 Externalist Approach

In the externalist approach, many researchers in the sociology of education have established results related to "the influence of social factors on gender in literacy" (Reuchlin; Mingat, Lautrey, cited by Ndoye, 2002). Deschamps, Lorenzi-Cioldi, and Meyer, cited by Ndoye

(2002), presented "an analysis of the selective mechanisms of the education system and found that the weight of socio-economic and cultural variables is significant and disproportionately disadvantages children from lower social backgrounds."

Calgar (1983, p. 20) notes the convergence of his research results across various experiences, emphasizing "the decisive influence of social factors on academic performance. For him, by the end of the first year of primary school, a student's academic results bear the imprint of cultural and family characteristics. The duration and quality of a child's education largely depend on their social origin." For Bourdieu, cited by Koman (2003), "children receive from their parents a cultural gift that contributes to their privileged cultural formation. It is thus important to understand the concept of cultural capital as a set of knowledge and information that can be legitimized and sanctioned by a school diploma." He considers that educational inequalities result from an inferior culture and a consideration of value systems, such as the culture of effort and the desire to succeed in middle and upper classes, which is a matter of honor and privilege, increasing the lack of will, ambition, and a culture of ease among children from disadvantaged backgrounds. In the area of family factors, several scientific publications highlight the links between a family's socio-economic level and students' academic performance. Ndoye (2002, p. 99) suggested "that the impact of family structure, social class, economic level, family social dynamics, child care methods, the mother's education level, and her encouragement of girls' academic success should be studied in greater depth regarding girls' academic performance."

The externalist approach thus attributes the causes of gender disparities to factors external to educational institutions. For proponents of this approach, "the socio-professional category and parents' education level, especially that of the mother, are indicators of the social environment and play a decisive role in young people's academic future. Academic success depends on the alignment of the culture acquired in the family environment with that disseminated by the school system" (Diambomba et al., 1996, p. 10; Ouédraogo, 1989, p. 8). According to Diop Kane (1998, p. 8), in Senegal, for example, around age fifteen, "the Senegalese girl, especially in rural areas, begins to learn her future role as a homemaker. She becomes a helping hand for her mother. Water chores and small domestic tasks increasingly fall to her." This means that, in addition to schoolwork, girls must perform other tasks, leading to dispersion and fatigue compared to boys. Diop Kane (1998, p. 3-4) adds that: "Literacy, among other things, expands opportunities for women, reduces maternal and child mortality, improves child health and nutrition, raises the marriage age, increases contraceptive use, and reduces fertility." She further states that "parents prefer to enroll boys rather than girls, showing that this preference is rooted in economic logic." Since a girl leaves the family home upon marriage, unlike a boy, parents find it preferable to invest in boys' education, expecting returns for their own family. For Koné, cited by Ndoye (2002), "children from poor families, families with illiterate parents, or large families experience higher failure rates than others." A relatively comprehensive identification of factors influencing girls' schooling quality is provided by Kaboré (1996), who states that "economic level alone is insufficient to explain this quality." The parents' education level, particularly the mother's, appears to be the most determining factor. She adds that: "to describe the ideal family situation for girls' academic success, one would refer to the conjunction of family physical factors and adequate family interaction modes (parental involvement, proximity to children, family harmony, and encouragement of girls' academic success)."

Enriching the range of sociological obstacles to girls' literacy, Herz, Kourouma, Swabe, Singdiba, and Guindo, cited by Ndoye (2002, p. 41), explain that "girls marry much earlier than boys, and the fear of pregnancy is one of the factors explaining early marriage, especially in rural areas. As a result, they struggle to stay in school, and if they do, they perform less well than boys." According to Mine/Martissano (1998, p. 22), "the family is the first community where gender behavior is learned. The mother, in particular, and the rational experiences witnessed teach the child the social attitudes specific to their environment." The assimilation of gender behavioral patterns occurs through the values of the child's group. Addressing the issue of educational inequality, they recall some theories of intellectual disability and note that "individual differences consistently observed in children's acquisitions under the same teaching have always been largely attributed to differences in intelligence, aptitudes, or, in more recent terminology, cognitive differences." For Ndoye (2002, p. 11), "the lack of literacy among mothers tends to have negative effects on girls' access to and retention in school." For the same author, "in Malawi, the number of girls tends to be higher in areas where mothers have a better literacy level."

The greatest aspiration of illiterate women is marriage, and their daughters are expected to marry early to fulfill their roles as wives and mothers. Early marriage, especially in rural areas, is thus identified as a factor contributing to girls' under-schooling. The educational space is defined by physical accessibility, expressed, for example, by proximity or distance, as well as cultural and social distance or the degree of approval of institutions and interventions by directly affected populations. While this educational space is initially analyzed in terms of physical distances, this analysis must be continued and deepened by studying social and cultural distances. "[. . .] new methods based on observing objectified spatial behaviors, i.e., how a person perceives their environment, others, and the encompassing reality, must be employed" (Brock, cited by Carron and Ta Ngoc, 1981, p. 76).

From the main conclusions of these descriptive studies,

it is clear that the historical approach, which perceives a difference between the pre-colonial and post-colonial periods, explains girls' difficulties in accessing education and their poor performance at school through "the institutionalization of an inegalitarian logic between men and women and the reinforcement of women's exclusion from public and societal spheres during colonization" (World Bank, 1995). The ethnographic approach encompasses all research conducted in Guinea on gender disparities in education. An example is Sow (1996), who notes that "schooling costs are a critical factor in the decision to enroll a girl in school. When resources do not allow all children to be schooled, parents preferentially enroll boys. It seems that girls' utility in household and domestic tasks is greater than that of boys." For proponents of the externalist approach, the causes of gender disparities in education lie outside educational institutions. Thus, these causes must be sought outside these institutions, indicating that the gender issue encompasses a vast research field involving diverse economic, social, cultural, and ideological aspects. It is also distinctly noted that the mother's attitude is a determining factor in girls' success.

3.6 Gender Disparities in Schooling According to Socio-Economic Characteristics

To assess gender disparities, a first approach is to compare gross enrollment rates for females and males at different educational levels. Table 1 provides the gross enrollment rates for both sexes and the gender parity index, calculated by dividing the female gross enrollment rate by the male rate, for four academic years.

Table 1: Gross Enrollment Rates (%) by Sex and Gender Parity Index, Evolution from 1990 to 2003

	1990–91			1995–96			2000–01			2003–04		
	TBS		Indice de parité	TBS		Indice de parité	TBS		Indice de parité	TBS		Indice de parité
	Filles	Garçons	F/G	Filles	Garçons	F/G	Filles	Garçons	F/G	Filles	Garçons	F/G
Pré—scolaire	—	—	—	2,2	2,3	0,93	—	—	—	—	—	—
Primaire	21,8	51,7	0,42	36,5	64,4	0,57	57	75,8	0,75	69,2	89,8	0,77
Collège	6,3	19,2	0,33	9,8	27,1	0,36	17,5	42,1	0,41	22,6	48,3	0,47
Lycée	1,6	7,7	0,21	3,2	12,9	0,25	5,7	18,4	0,31	8,4	23,5	0,36
Ens. supérieur[41]	—	—	—	18	230	0,08	37	303	0,12	—	—	—

Source: The Guinean Education System: Diagnosis and Perspectives for Educational Policy in the Context of Strong Macro-Economic Constraints and Poverty Reduction, (p. 144) Africa Region Human Development Working Paper Series

Figure1 shows the evolution of the gender parity index by level, representing the number of girls enrolled per 100 boys. For example, a parity index of 0.35 means approximately 35 girls are enrolled for every 100 boys. The data clearly show that girls' schooling lags significantly behind boys' at all educational levels. For instance, in 2003-04, the gross enrollment rate for boys in primary education was 89.8%, compared to 69.2% for girls. A second result is the improvement in girls' sit-

uation over the decade. In 1990, at the primary level, there were only 4 girls enrolled for every 10 boys; today, there are nearly 8. While this progress is insufficient, as girls remain disadvantaged, particularly at higher educational levels, the situation is evolving toward reducing significant gender disparities across all levels. Another observation is that gender disparities increase with the level of education: the parity index was 0.75 in primary education in 2000, slightly below 0.4 in secondary education, and only 0.12 in higher education. The higher the level of education, the greater the selection in favor of boys. This could be attributed to the cross-sectional method used: students enrolled in higher education in 2000 belong to an older cohort than those in primary education at the same time, not yet benefiting from recent positive developments for girls.

Figure 1: Gross Enrollment Rates (%) by Sex and Gender Parity Index, Evolution from 1990 to 2003
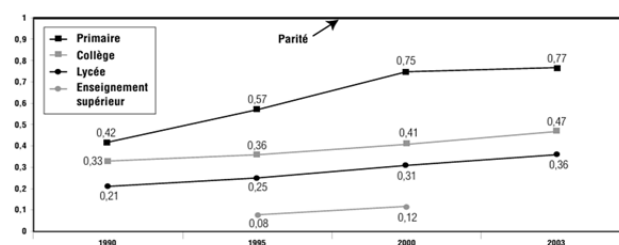
Source: The Guinean Education System: Diagnosis and Perspectives for Educational Policy in the Context of Strong Macro-Economic Constraints and Poverty Reduction, (p. 144) Africa Region Human Development Working Paper Series

Using a longitudinal or quasi-longitudinal method, children aged 7–12 years (the reference group for primary education) in 1990 belong to the 12–17 age group in 1995 (forming a significant proportion of secondary students) and the 17–22 age group in 2000 (forming a significant proportion of higher education students). Comparing the parity index for primary education in 1990 with secondary education in 1995 and higher education in 2000 confirms the cross-sectional method's results: gender disparities increase with educational level, with the index at 0.4 in primary education in 1990, about 0.3 in secondary education in 1995, and 0.12 in higher education in 2000. Selection is much stricter for girls during transitions between educational cycles.

The difficulties in girls' access and their poor performance at school are explained by the institutionalization of an inegalitarian logic between men and women and "the reinforcement of women's exclusion from public and societal spheres during colonization" (World Bank, 1995, p. 41). This aligns with the historical approach, which perceives a difference between pre-colonial and post-colonial periods. According to the World Bank, "before colonization, there was no difference in access to education for girls and boys. Both had the same right to education, differing only in the purpose assigned to each

sex." At Koranic schools, for example, girls were only required to learn a few surahs for prayer, while boys were expected to go further. However, both were called to learn agriculture, the most important economic sector at the time. This thesis, explicitly defended by the World Bank, is also partially supported by Nodjie, Niane, Lagardère, and Diop/Kane, cited by Ndoye (2002, p. 10), who argue that "the origin of girls' poor performance at school must be sought in colonial history." At that time, the legislator reinforced patriarchal and Western logic, as girls' education, when included in indigenous community development programs, aimed to develop domestic virtues.

Indeed, "fearing that educated girls would go against traditional customs, norms, and values" (Guido, 1997, p. 4), indigenous communities were wary of colonial schools, leading most African families to oppose the schooling of their children, particularly girls, arguing that women are the guardians of culture in African society. Kaboré (1998, p. 80) observed that "since then, the schooling of African children has accentuated their specialization by gender: domestic work, sedentariness, and a more reserved attitude for girls; more outdoor life, dynamic, and active attitudes for boys, with economic means or cultural and social values used to justify this differentiation."

In Africa, "girls' school trajectories are unique, with female students having a different perception of school than boys. Expert logics of egalitarianism (by gender), democracy, and humanitarianism do not always align with families' educational expectations" (Lange, cited by Kanté, 2001, p. 19). In Guinea, the evaluation of NAFA centers concluded that the NAFA approach had a significant impact on girls' education, considering the number of graduates and their integration.

Figure 2: Comparison of Graduates According to the Application of Acquired Knowledge
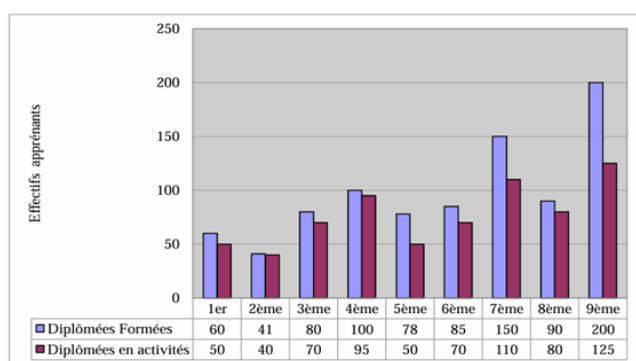

Source: Author, from provided data.

According to statistics provided by the authorities, out of 884 trained learners, 690 applied the knowledge gained during training. Some authorities are unaware of the exact number of graduates currently engaged in informal activities such as sewing, dyeing, embroidery,

and soap-making. These active women manage to support their families and supervise their children. These data enabled the creation of Figure 2.

Figure 3: Comparison of Learners by Gender
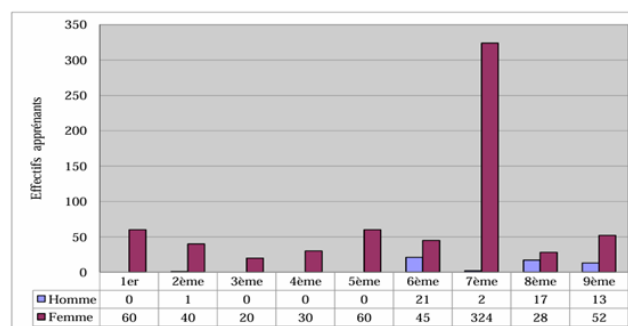
Source: Author, from survey data.

Our surveys reveal that out of 713 learners, 659 are girls and women (92%), while men represent only 8%. This gap is explained by the fact that the centers recruited more girls/women than men, as the primary objective is to support the female gender in socio-professional integration. Those generally concerned are girls who dropped out of school due to unwanted pregnancies, lack of parental resources, or women who lost their husbands without hope, as well as girls or women victims of early marriage under parental pressure. The results recorded in the table above enabled the creation of Figure 3.

The Institute for Development Studies and the Ministry of Pre-University Education and Vocational Training, cited by Kanté (2001), noted in their study on primary schooling that "the dropout rate for girls is higher than for boys." For these authors, "late enrollment age for girls impacts their dropout rates." For Sow (1994, p. 76), "schooling costs are a critical factor in the decision to enroll a girl in school. When resources do not allow all children to be schooled, parents preferentially enroll boys." Indeed, it seems that girls' utility in household and domestic tasks is greater than that of boys. For this reason, Kanté (2001, p. 50) notes that "due to lack of means, parents are often unable to enroll more than two children in school." In reality, schooling costs affect girls more than boys. Similarly, Bayo (2004, p. 49) showed that "there is an inequality of opportunity between girls and boys for access to schooling." Children of both sexes do not receive the same treatment when it comes to literacy. The causes of these inequalities are partly rooted in the community and family. Positive discrimination in favor of boys is generated and sustained by society. Girls are primarily educated to become model wives and mothers. This author concludes that "the causes of gender disparities in the education system are located in the culture of the environment." Kanté (2001) made the same observation, noting that "within the family, parents predominantly favor male children. This attitude stems from the tradition and religion of the environment and significantly influences decisions regarding

girls' schooling and retention in school."

In contrast, Deschamps, Lorenzi-Cioldi, and Meyer, cited by Ndoye (2002), presented "an analysis of the selective mechanisms of the education system and found that the weight of socio-economic and cultural variables is significant and disproportionately disadvantages children from lower social backgrounds." Calgar (1983, p. 20) notes the convergence of his research results, emphasizing "the decisive influence of social factors on academic performance. By the end of the first year of primary school, a student's academic results bear the imprint of cultural and family characteristics. The duration and quality of a child's education largely depend on their social origin." For Bourdieu, cited by Koman (2003), "children receive from their parents a cultural gift that contributes to their privileged cultural formation. It is thus important to understand the concept of cultural capital as a set of knowledge and information that can be legitimized and sanctioned by a school diploma." He considers that educational inequalities result from an inferior culture and a consideration of value systems, such as the culture of effort and the desire to succeed in middle and upper classes, which is a matter of honor and privilege, increasing the lack of will, ambition, and a culture of ease among children from disadvantaged backgrounds. In the area of family factors, several scientific publications highlight the links between a family's socio-economic level and students' academic performance. Ndoye (2002, p. 99) suggested "that the impact of family structure, social class, economic level, family social dynamics, child care methods, the mother's education level, and her encouragement of girls' academic success should be studied in greater depth regarding girls' academic performance." The externalist approach thus attributes the causes of gender disparities to factors external to educational institutions. For proponents of this approach, "the socio-professional category and parents' education level, especially that of the mother, are indicators of the social environment and play a decisive role in young people's academic future. Academic success depends on the alignment of the culture acquired in the family environment with that disseminated by the school system" (Diambomba et al., 1996, p. 10; Ouédraogo, 1989, p. 8). According to Diop Kane (1998, p. 8), in Senegal, around age fifteen, "the Senegalese girl, especially in rural areas, begins to learn her future role as a homemaker. She becomes a helping hand for her mother. Water chores and small domestic tasks increasingly fall to her." This means that, in addition to schoolwork, girls must perform other tasks, leading to dispersion and fatigue compared to boys. Diop Kane (1998, p. 3-4) adds that: "Literacy, among other things, expands opportunities for women, reduces maternal and child mortality, improves child health and nutrition, raises the marriage age, increases contraceptive use, and reduces fertility." She further states that "parents prefer to enroll boys rather than girls, showing that this preference is rooted in economic logic." Since a girl leaves the family home upon marriage, unlike a boy, parents find it preferable to invest in boys' education, expecting returns for their own family. For Koné, cited by Ndoye (2002), "children from poor families, families with illiterate parents, or large families experience higher failure rates than others." A relatively comprehensive identification of factors influencing girls' schooling quality is provided by Kaboré (1996), who states that "economic level alone is insufficient to explain this quality." The parents' education level, particularly the mother's, appears to be the most determining factor. She adds that: "to describe the ideal family situation for girls' academic success, one would refer to the conjunction of family physical factors and adequate family interaction modes (parental involvement, proximity to children, family harmony, and encouragement of girls' academic success)."

Conclusion

Analyzing the impact of educational programs on improving the intellectual and professional capacities of Guinean women today is an ambitious endeavor. Our research results have shown that there is an inequality of opportunity between girls and boys in access to schooling. Children of both sexes do not receive the same treatment when it comes to education. The hypothesis guiding this research was that literacy for Guinean women could contribute to their intellectual and professional fulfillment and increase their participation in social, political, and economic life, as well as reduce gender disparities.

In this study, four essential approaches were examined to understand authors' positions on the phenomenon of disparity and gender fulfillment in education: the "externalist approach," "historical approach," "ethnographic approach," and "conflict approach." Generally, the research results also allowed us to understand that education is a channel for conveying the knowledge necessary for Guinean women's fulfillment, the enhancement of their intellectual and professional capacities, and their active participation in social, political, and economic life. The study indicates that the issue of gender disparity persists and risks worsening if solutions are not implemented. The development of strategies to address the raised issues leads to a triple question: (i) What needs to be done? (ii) For whom and with whom should it be done? (iii) How should it be done? These three questions relate to what must be done to attempt to eliminate gender disparities in the education system.

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