Female students' assessment of the curriculum and career guidance

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The present study is part of a more complex analysis, whose aim was to obtain comparative data in order to propose some educational strategies that might increase the numbers of women undertaking engineering and natural sciences studies in a specific context. Based on quantitative and qualitative data obtained through questionnaire and focus groups with students, several educational strategies for enforcing and empowering female students are presented, contextualized for a specific university. At a first glance, it seems that female students in engineering are concentrating more on their study experience and the possibility to improve the quality of their training; those in natural sciences are more concerned about their future employment and implicitly their chances on the labor market. It is argued that study and work in engineering and natural sciences shows not so highly gender-segmented fields at the level of higher education, but later in their professional career there are more barriers for women entering these fields. Moreover, the issue of diversity and gender sensitive policy in education and employment is not about engineering or science only; not about women only and not to be solved by women only. A coherent strategy for developing a gender sensitive university culture should concentrate on the following dimensions: statistic data in reporting gender related issues; improving recruitment opportunities; curriculum development; teacher training; vocational counseling and career development. Based on students' assessment, the following aspects have been explored: gender sensitive curriculum and training strategies and career counseling or guidance as support for future employment. In conclusion several measures for transforming socio-cultural and educational contexts and practices in university were proposed.