BOOK REVIEW

Gender and Information Technology: Moving Beyond Access to Co-Create Global Partnership

Christine Rodemeyer, Wayne State University, USA

Gender and Information Technology: Moving Beyond Access to Co-Create Global Partnership
Mary Kirk
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Research has shown that it is beneficial for businesses to create diverse teams of individuals with a range of skills and backgrounds. This is especially true in information technology where teams are often handicapped by working virtually and can benefit from the richness that diversity brings. According to Mary Kirk, the author of Gender and Information Technology: Moving Beyond Access to Co-Create Global Partnership, gender diversity is still an ideal rather than a reality in most IT contexts. As such, we are still not realizing the benefits that diversity can bestow.

In the book, Professor Kirk indicates that inequality and injustice within the duality of gender, is still present in the fields of science and information technology. Certainly, there is access for everyone, including females, but societal pressures and motivations limit complete partnership within the IT world. The author expands on this idea by offering numerous examples from the IT field of situations where stereotyping prevails, ranging from video games to Nobel prizes.

The book is not all negative, though, as the information revolution is also seen as a vehicle for potential change, offering new ways for the genders to interact with each other more equally and to reach true partnerships. However to make this happen, certain caveats and necessary steps will have to be taken to make sure that the new technologies do not increase rather than decrease gender inequality.

This witty, well researched, and well organized book contains information and solutions that could be applied within any field. However, it is specifically written for IT educators and professionals. The goal of the book, as stated repeatedly by the author, it demonstrate how measures taken within the IT field can create
opportunities for women and facilitate true partnerships between men and women.

To achieve this goal, the book is divided into three sections with chapters within each topic. The first section covers the fundamentals and should be read first as it delves into the current feminist perspective on how males and females differ. This section also demonstrates the similarities between women and other oppressed groups including classes and minorities and discusses how women who are also oppressed for being in another minority group are at a larger disadvantage.

The second section outlines the goals women have for the future in a culture based on equality. This section gives examples as to the principles, approaches, and beliefs that shape a dualistic society and affect perceptions and behaviors in different areas of IT, media, language, education, and business.

The author indicates in this context that women are less likely to enter the IT field due to the male-centered IT language and the influence of dominance, violence, and sexual metaphors. Thus, mass media influences the extent that women participate in IT, just as the education system limits the number of women that enter IT related occupations. The process is completed with discrimination against women in the IT profession itself. This section concludes with examples, analyzed in-depth, on how the ever-present attitudes, beliefs, and values about women and technology minimize women as users, contributors, or benefactors of IT.

The third section offers practical examples and tools for improving the current situation. In language and media, the book explores ways to create and develop the cultural components that link relationships in IT. In education, the book makes suggestions on how to create partnerships between students and teachers while considering the different perspectives of students of every age and changing the learning and testing environments to make them more user friendly to women. Lastly, the book attempts to solve some large, world-wide problems of gender injustice and world-wide economic development with new types of partnerships and new policy and economic models.

This book can be read from beginning to end in a linear fashion. The chapters are organized under the institutions of business, media, language, and education. The empirical evidence is clear and engaging and the teaching tools are easy to understand and practical. Even though the book is intended for educators and practitioners in the IT field, many of the tools apply to other areas. For a quick read, one could read the first section then the chapters within the second and third sections that apply to his or her area of interest. In any sequence, the book is bound to be interesting read and potentially very helpful to educators and practitioners who are interested in gender equality and true partnerships between men and women.

Christine Rodemeyer graduated from Michigan State University in 2007 with a degree in Political Theory and Constitutional Democracy. Currently, she is a graduate student working on her Masters in Business Administration from Wayne State University while working as a graduate student assistant. After she graduates in December, she plans on pursuing a career in non-profit organizations. It is her goal to fight social injustices especially in dealing with gender inequality.