



Inclusive Innovation: Applying a Gender Lens

Gender and the Innovation Agenda

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Applying a gender lens to Canada's innovation agenda reveals a number of systemic barriers arising from the preoccupation with Science Technology Engineering and Math (STEM). Using critical discourse analysis (along with hard data) this paper reveals four systemic barriers and assumptions which both disadvantage women and impede our economic and social development. First, in spite of decades of activism the proportion of women in engineering has increased marginally while the proportion of women in computer science has declined. We need systemic strategies which produce real results rather than just good intentions. Second, the focus on STEM ignores the significant proportion of women in technology roles, including CEOs of large tech companies, who typically advance through other pathways. Third, the preoccupation with STEM not only ensures that 80-90% of research funding goes to men but also that major social issues are ignored. Finally, innovation is about "doing differently," but the barriers to "doing differently" are often not technological but related to regulation, organizational issues, human behavior, marketing and more typically the domain of social sciences and humanities, which are dominated by women. The preoccupation with STEM not only excludes women but also undermines the success of the innovation agenda.