



**Arab International Women's Forum**  
**By**  
**Young Arab Women Leaders**

**April 18, in Fez**

**Session II:**

**Exploring innovative models for education, skills development and leadership training in Morocco, the MENA region and internationally**

The panelists are supposed to discuss the role of the academic community in empowering women through education, skill development, and business and leadership training.

**Panelist:**

**Nada BIAZ, General Director, Groupe ISCAE**

## Question 1:

As a Moroccan born and raised woman who was able to get to top management positions, what has made the difference to you? Why have you made the choice of becoming the head of a public Business School?

If I go from my own personal experience as a Moroccan born, raised and educated woman, I would definitely say that nothing stops us but ourselves. To start with, I am proud to be a 100% Moroccan product because I studied in national public schools including junior high school, high school, undergraduate (being myself ISCAE alumnus) and graduate studies at University Hassan II in Casablanca. This is probably why I wanted to give back by working for a public BS, specifically ISCAE that helped me become what I am. Actually, I can tell with no hesitation that what seems to be a common local academic background can take a Moroccan woman where she wants to get. Personally, all the way through my academic journey, I have never felt that being a girl would discriminate me, even if it were positive discrimination. It was the same thing when I went back to teaching at my home school ISCAE, or running my own business or while teaching in a private business school. Now, as a general director of a public business school, I still never feel that being a woman is neither a handicap nor a privilege. However, that's my own experience and maybe it's a biased perception that stems from my positive attitude in general: seeing the best in every possible situation. This means that attitude and self-perception is a key factor of success.

Another thing that made a difference to me is the fact that I have studied in a Business School, a "safe" learning environment, as a starting point for young women who are targeting top management positions. This is because in Business Schools, we work in team settings, where girls and boys are in equal competitive positions, where girls take the lead easily because of their sharp negotiation skills. As a result, our men graduates are prepared to dealing with

women in the workplace, as colleagues or managers. In fact, 70% of our students are girls and this proportion has been stable over the last five years. In addition, girls are involved in all social, cultural and even sports activities inside and outside the school.

A third factor that made the difference is the influence of “Row Models”. My 76 yearsold mother used to be a mathematics university professor and she decided to leave home at the age of fifteen to pursue her studies in Damascus with the support of her own mother. This was very uncommon for that time. It probably had an impact on me. Later on, ISCAE and its women professors influenced me as well as the encouragements of all my professors women and men. Moreover, our school being historically the first BS in Morocco, many of the brilliant women executives and women professors graduated from ISCAE. Actually, in the last five years, the percentage of women in our full-time faculty increased from 26% in 2012 to 40%in 2017. 40% of these women faculty are ISCAE graduates. Approximately half of the administrative staff and the team of directors and top managers is women.

In conclusion, beyondmy personal experience and above any external factors, the most important thing for young womenis to realize that there is nothing that stops us more than our self-censorship. It’s our denial of what we really want and could be that keeps us away from getting the most of our potential. As girls and women, we tend, unconsciously to hide behind our men, thinking that our role is to support the strong image of a father, a husband and later on, of a son. We do not allow our personal success if our men do not succeed and we feel guilty if it is not the case. And when our men are successful, we might think that it’s the limit of our happiness. The success of partners and sons or children in general is very important to any parent, it is human, but women cannot live their lives through others.

It is about time that our love, our motherhood and our femininity become drivers rather than limitations. It is time to realize that we can have our own style of leadership and that we can impact organizations and humanity in our own special way.

This is possible through Humility, Patience and Hard Work, three qualities that women usually have.

Question:

What do you wish you would have known that you know now and that you like to share with young women?

1 advice or 1 statement to tell young women?

After graduation, I did not know how to go through a woman's cycle of life keeping sustainable professional success and renewing my energy. I thought I had to choose and I chose to put my career on stand by for a while, which I do not regret. Fortunately, I had new opportunities later and I was able to catch them. In fact, you never know when your great opportunity comes and you should be prepared to take the chance anytime.

So, here is what I want to tell my young women students:

The window of opportunities never closes until you close it.

After graduation, new windows will open, new opportunities will arise, and a new adventure will begin, the adventure of true life.

So, you'll have to face your worst enemy: your guilt. Once you get over it, you will be able to enjoy your own life.