



SECOND WORLD CONFERENCE ON WOMEN AND EDUCATION

Working group "Gender equality and teacher training"

Coeducation: teachers have their say

PROGRESS IN EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES

The improvement of living conditions for women and girls has been, and continues to be, an aim on the agenda of governments and social partners. Both for the trade unions and the feminist movement, achieving real equality is a concern into which a great deal of effort is being put, diverse strategies are being promoted and where education is considered a key instrument to guarantee change.

In the last thirty-five years, both the international and Spanish context, together with the work undertaken by organised civil society, have led to major changes in equal opportunities between men and women in all areas of life, whether social, political, economic or cultural. Many obstacles have been overcome, particularly bearing in mind the position of inferiority in which women had been placed during the Franco regime, when they were excluded from virtually all social spheres, and where the model promoted focused on their role as a mother and their responsibility for the home, inculcated through sexist education. It is worth stressing that the four decades the dictatorship lasted meant a significant step backwards in the country's development with regard to the previous period, given that, in the Second Republic, both men and women had been awarded full legal capacity; the right to vote, divorce and abortion laws had been adopted, and mixed schools had been promoted on coeducational principles.

It was not, then, until the Seventies when the first signs of openness emerged in the Franco regime. In the midst of the social and economic upheavals Spain was experiencing, legislation which directly discriminated against women – such as the 'marriage licence' required for the signing of job or sales contracts – was abolished, and Penal Code articles on the crimes of adultery or related to the use of contraception were repealed. It was in this climate of modernisation that the General Education Act was drafted. This law created legal conditions that promoted the expansion of co-educational schooling; it also standardised education, resulting in the widespread introduction of the same curriculum for both boys and girls in General Basic Education (i.e. compulsory schooling).

The education reform movements of the day approached the co-education of girls and boys as a pre-requisite. Apart from providing a shared space, co-ed schools introduced girls to contents that had, until that point, been the preserve of boys. This entailed recognising girls as individuals who would take part in public life, in socially-valued roles, and was consequently the acknowledgement that women should not be relegated in status or treated as inferior beings.

It was with the arrival of democracy, and after the adoption of the 1978 Constitution, when the feminist movement, which at that time was becoming more organised, highlighted the need to create specific measures to safeguard the principle of equality. Consequently, in 1983, when the first Socialist government began to create the earliest instruments and institutions with competence in this area, such as the Spanish Institute for Women's Affairs, which was responsible for sponsoring and promoting Equality Plans, it was forming the first structures for the development of equality policies. This decade also saw the pursuit of



changes to reform the education system and bring it up to date, fostering improvements in areas including initial and continuing teacher training.

The demands of the feminist movements, combined with international pressure, both from the United Nations and the European Union, which drew up binding legal instruments for Spain, facilitated profound changes in attitudes in a country which was moving towards the elimination of explicit inequality, exclusion from public life and legislation that specifically discriminated against women. The challenge of effective equal opportunities began to be taken up, in an effort to reduce the wage gap, eliminate segregation in the job market, combat gender-based violence, promote joint responsibility and move beyond the model of associating a woman's role only with motherhood, as well as recognising her right to choose when and how to exercise it.

In this respect, where education was concerned, the LOGSE Education Act included a commitment to build a co-educational system, and the complexity of building real equality became apparent in the process. On the one hand, the spread of co-education was seen as progress, while at the same time, in practice, new challenges were emerging, such as segregation into the types of profession chosen by men and by women, and the respective economic returns and status obtained from these. As a result, different sections of the education community began to talk about mechanisms ingrained in the education system which generated forms of sexist discrimination. In other words, the hidden curriculum began to be mentioned and analysed, in reference to the non-formal and, above all, ideological patterns transmitted through school practice.

Once the existence of a hidden curriculum had been denounced, it was considered that, if true co-education was to be guaranteed, instruments would have to be developed to facilitate female empowerment when accessing professions that continued and continue to be a male preserve, as well as to consolidate the realisation that women were capable of playing a larger role in the public sphere. At the same time, there was a need for the mainstreaming, in the school curriculum and in classroom relationships, of a set of abilities that were, and still remain, desirable for all pupils and which had so far been absent. Over two decades, considerable effort was put into teacher training and the preparation of teaching materials and projects that were to facilitate equal education for all, in which women's contributions to education were publicised and recognised.

In the 21st century, over the past decade, equality policies have been heavily promoted and women are now present in different areas of public life. There has been an increase in institutionality, via the creation, in March 2004, of the General Secretariat for Equality Policies and of the Ministry for Equality in 2008. Two laws have also been passed: the Organic Act for Comprehensive Protective Measures against Gender-based Violence and the Organic Act on Effective Equality of Men and Women. Both laws attribute special importance to education as a tool to help prevent discrimination and fight against violence, and it is also considered a particularly important area in which to create conditions of effective equality. The legislation refers to educational intervention and work on the hidden curriculum. It was also at this time that Citizenship Education was introduced as a school subject.

Although the challenge of effective equality was not addressed as a whole, between 2004 and 2008, the budget for public investment on equality did increase substantially, facilitating the implementation of actions to promote equality in different areas. One such action was *Sindicadas*, a meeting place for education unionists, designed to work for gender-based change in trade union organisations. However, in recent years, all these policies and actions



have suffered under the pretext of the austerity policies promoted by governments for whom equality has ceased to be a priority.

CUTBACKS IN EDUCATION AND THE WELFARE STATE IN RECENT YEARS

The austerity policies and cutbacks being implemented under the pretext of solving the economic crisis are resulting in suffering for most of the population, in the shape of job losses, wage losses, labour rights losses, social rights losses ... in short, further impoverishment and fewer rights. This is also leading to greater inequality between men and women, as women are already in a worse position on the labour market and it is primarily women who are having to remedy the shortcomings of the welfare state.

- **Women's unemployment stands at 26.5%** (above the average figure), and men's at 25.5%. We should also bear in mind a gender gap in the employment rate of 13 percentage points (women, 53.1%; men 66.4%). Were these rates equal, female unemployment would be equivalent to 40%.

- **Increase in women's work as carers.** In the inactive population as a whole, the number of women who claim "caring for children, sick adults, disabled and elderly people" as their reason for not seeking employment is 20 times higher than the number of men making the same claim (541,600 women vs. 24,100 men); when the reason given is "other family-related or personal responsibilities", there are ten times as many women as men (1,323,400 women vs. 119,000 men). Paternity leave has not been extended to four weeks as had been provided for under the Equality Act.

- **Drop in female employment in education.** According to the official Labour Force Survey, a total of 46,400 jobs have been lost in the last year in the Spanish education sector, more than 75% of which have been women's jobs. If we take teaching staff in public-sector non-university institutions alone, this loss was 21,136 in 2013, of which 12,038 were women, i.e. 57%.

- **Increase in teaching workload and decline in services to meet student diversity.** The increase in the teaching workload, from 18 to 20 teaching hours, has led to: a rise in the size of the groups and student numbers that need to be catered for; the disappearance of diverse support activities, and a decline in the time spent on solidarity and community projects..., in short, it has led to the loss of services designed to meet student diversity, meaning less attention for students with greater educational needs, and in particular students from more disadvantaged backgrounds.

All of this is the result of a policy which places the burden of the effects of the economic crisis exclusively on the working classes, but which also responds to the antiquated ideology of our current government, which it has also demonstrated in its **Bill to Reform the Act on the Voluntary Termination of Pregnancy**, which denies women the right to decide whether to become a mother and exposes them to greater health risks.

THE NEW EDUCATION LAW – LOMCE – AND BACKTRACKING ON GENDER ISSUES



As a result of a backward-looking approach to education, a choice has been made in favour of the rote learning of contents as opposed to the development of a comprehensive education which prepares students for professional life and to exercise their democratic citizenship. We shall highlight some of the contents which will have negative consequences, particularly on young women:

- **Disappearance of education in democratic values**, as a cross-cutting feature of the educational curriculum, and its replacement with “the entrepreneurial spirit”, which is alien to the notion of educating for participatory, democratic and egalitarian co-existence.
- **Reinforcement of the subject of Religion**, with its own specific perspective on the social role to be played by women, and its own specific and repressive beliefs on sexuality.
- **Disappearance of the subjects of Ethics and Education for Citizenship & Human Rights**, which specifically deal with gender-based equality, gender diversity and sexual orientation: subjects whose content is recommended by European institutions and endorsed by multiple Supreme Court rulings.
- **Promotion of education segregated by sexes**. Rather than seeking to put an end to the shortcomings regarding discrimination against women which still exists in education today, the new law demonstrates an ideology typical of a past which we thought we had put behind us, by supporting educational establishments which segregate pupils by gender. The Wert Act is blind to the current needs of a society where relationships between the sexes have moved on.

To defend these establishments – and justify their subsidising – the Act itself indicates the date on which it has set its sights: 1960, the date when the UNESCO convention, ratified by Spain in 1969, states that the differentiation of education by gender is not discriminatory. Both dates are prior to the Spanish Constitution and, above all, are prior to the generalised implementation of co-education and the crucial progress this has meant for men and women, both in terms of the levels of education attained and with regard to learning on behaviour and co-existence between sexes.

ACTIONS AGAINST EDUCATION AND TEACHER-TRAINING CUTBACKS

In these two years, women in education trade unions have continued to fight to defend quality public-sector education which will promote equality between sexes in future generations. Our struggle has focused on three areas: social mobilisation; actions and demands made to the authorities; and the communication of proposals for resistance among teachers, with particular emphasis on training and on the preparation of co-educational teaching approaches and materials designed to expose different forms of sexism and to raise awareness on the need to educate on the value of effective equality between men and women.

- I. **In social mobilisation**, we have created a common front under the *Plataforma Estatal por la Escuela Pública* (‘State Platform in favour of Public-sector Schooling’), and have called five general strikes, indefinite teacher strikes, a people’s consultation, large numbers of demonstrations, and have been supported by diverse Spanish and international organisations including EI in Brussels, Alter Summit Athens 2013, FM de Educación 2014, FENPROF, and mass demonstrations or Marchas Verdes (‘Green Marches’), where the education community – wearing green T-shirts as the symbol of



public-sector education – have toured every Spanish city, calling for: quality public-sector education, the removal from office of the Education Minister and an end to the cutbacks.

- II. **In the area of participation and demands made to authorities**, we have undertaken actions to counteract the LOMCE Act, both before and after its adoption: amendments to the State School Council, a political pact with all parties, complaint made to the European Commission and an application to the Ombudswoman to submit an appeal for Unconstitutionality against the Education Act, for reasons including segregation by sex in schools subsidised with public funds.
- III. However, it is in the third area, **of teacher training** where teachers will have their say. Their awareness and training will produce the instrument that will enable the non-implementation of the objectives pursued by this law and its neo-conservative policies which jeopardise co-education as the educational model for an egalitarian society.

In Spain, we are faced with three main problems: the lack of initial and ongoing training on gender-based issues, institutional non-compliance with existing legislation on Equality Plans in education establishments and quite widespread adverse viewpoints on this issue held by teachers.

To remedy this, our unions provide teachers with co-educational training, guidance and materials, raising awareness on gender issues. To achieve this, we not only arrange and take part in training days, but also circulate monographic publications on issues of gender and equality on a regular basis, keeping teachers informed and providing materials like the ones we are about to show.

We are focusing on four specific actions: 1. Giving greater visibility to women and their contribution to cultural history; 2. Preventing gender-based violence; 3. Joint responsibility; and 4. Deconstructing existing stereotypes and building new identities.

1. On **GIVING VISIBILITY**, we would highlight:

“Tiempo de mujeres, mujeres en el tiempo” [*Women’s Time. Women in Time*], teaching material in a calendar format, which offers monographs on different issues, giving women in the worlds of the arts, philosophy, politics, poetry, etc. greater visibility. Each of the 365 days of the year depicts a relevant achievement by a woman, demonstrating the abundance and versatility of their contributions. Monthly teaching ideas for all education levels are also included. These are distributed free of charge to all Spanish educational establishments and a version is available in all the languages spoken in Spain.

“Las maestras de la República” [*Women teachers in the Spanish Republic*], a lesson plan which provides information about the decisive role played by women in modernising education during the Second Republic. This was the source for the documentary of the same name which won a Spanish Film Academy Goya Award in 2014 and is a just tribute to all



those women teachers who worked with the single conviction that education could change the world and is a weapon for social transformation.

Publication of textbooks including “**Otras miradas. Aportaciones de las mujeres a las matemáticas**” [*Different perspectives: women’s contribution to mathematics*] “**Aportaciones de las mujeres a la lengua y literatura castellanas**” [*Women’s contribution to Castilian language and literature*], textbooks which make good the shortcomings in teaching textbooks, communicating contents which render women and their contributions to mathematics, and to the Castilian language and its literature, more visible.

2. On **PREVENTING GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE**, teaching proposals have been made to help teachers with self-training and guiding their pupils in the task of detecting and preventing gender-based violence, promoting its formal rejection. Different channels are used: advertising, social networks, textbooks, popular culture, the environment inside and outside the school, etc. We should highlight in particular our campaign “**Education & love, key points for teachers**”, lesson plans “**Not figures but lives**”, “**Stories for living and dreaming. Special edition Gender-based Violence Prevention**”, “**Zero tolerance in classrooms too**” and a photography competition that was turned into photography exhibitions entitled “Through a Woman’s Eyes”.

3. On **JOINT RESPONSIBILITY**, guides have been produced for working in schools with students and teachers, and outside with families, to raise awareness on the tasks of caring for other people, including dependants, as a task that is not exclusively female, showing the positive contribution which joint responsibility makes to all members of the family and to society as a whole. We would highlight “**Joint responsibility can also be taught**”, and “**How to share life on a basis of equality. A practical guide for boys and girls.**”

4. **DECONSTRUCTING SEXIST STEREOTYPES**: co-educational campaigns have been implemented to promote critical reflection about gender in socially- accepted male and female roles. One example is the campaign entitled “**Educating on an Equal Basis**” which analyses myths of romantic love and attempts to control partners in cyberspace, a campaign on “**Non-sexist toys**”, guides to detecting sexist content in textbooks, and on the use of inclusive, non-sexist language, emphasising the importance of this in the education sphere and raising teacher awareness on good usage. We would also highlight the teacher’s resource “**Families of colours**”, designed to raise teachers’ awareness of sexual diversity and gender identity in schools.

What we have sought to show in this paper:

- The need to invest in public-sector education policies that give education its rightful value as a country’s social capital.
- The negative consequences which the policies and cutbacks of neo-liberal governments are having on the education of the men and women of the future and the setback this entails for the achievement of real equality in the Spanish state.



- The vital role played by teachers among education agents as drivers and communicators of co-education which is the basis to inform fair-minded awareness and egalitarian principles.
- The vital significance of teacher training in the task of raising awareness to achieve effective equality between men and women from the earliest years of schooling.



LINKS

Teaching materials cited:

Giving Visibility

Women's Time. Women in Time

http://issuu.com/confederacion_intersindical/docs/calendario_tiempo_mujeres_2014

Women teachers in the Spanish Republic

http://www.educacionenvalores.org/IMG/article_PDF/article_a2843.pdf

Different perspectives: women's contribution to mathematics

<http://www.inmujer.gob.es/areasTematicas/educacion/programas/docs/aportMujeresMatematicas.pdf>

Women's contribution to Castilian language and literature

http://www.fe.ccoo.es/comunes/recursos/25/pub90783_Otras_miradas._Aportaciones_de_las_mujeres_a_la_lengua_y_literatura_castellanas.pdf

Preventing Gender-based Violence

Education & love, key points for teachers

<http://www.educandoenigualdad.com/antiguaweb/spip.php?article497>

Not figures but lives

http://issuu.com/confederacion_intersindical/docs/unidadesdidacticas_25n_issuu

Stories for living and dreaming. Special edition Gender-based Violence Prevention

<http://www.coeducaccio.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/09/cuentosparavivirysoc3b1ar.pdf>

Zero tolerance in classrooms too

<http://www.educandoenigualdad.com/antiguaweb/spip.php?article468>

Through a Woman's Eyes

<http://www.ustea.org/conojosdemujer/>

Joint Responsibility

Joint responsibility can also be taught

http://www.stes.es/mujer/mujer_materiales_didacticos.html



STEs · INTERSINDICAL

How to share life on a basis of equality. A practical guide for boys and girls
http://www.educarenigualdad.org/media/pdf/uploaded/old/Mat_171_guiacompartir_consejo_madrid.pdf

Deconstructing Sexist Stereotypes

Non-sexist toys

<http://www.feteugttextremadura.es/noticias/curso-educando-igualdad-materiales-curriculares-igualitarios-juegos-y-juquetes-no-sexistas>

Families of colours

<http://www.ftpfe.ccoo.es/boletines/juv/FamiliasColores/#/1/>

Other materials

CCOO: http://www.ccoo.es/cscceo/Areas:Mujeres_e_Igualdad

FETE-UGT: <http://www.educandoenigualdad.com/>

STEs: http://www.stes.es/mujer/mujer_materiales_didacticos.html