

INNOVATION IN THE SPANISH EDUCATION SYSTEM WITH A GENDER PERSPECTIVE. CHALLENGES AND IMPLICATIONS FOR ACADEMICS

Perla Elizabeth Bracamontes Ramírez*

Ricardo Pérez Mora**

ABSTRACT

Gender inequalities still present in the daily actions of women and men, the education sector strengthen concrete efforts to eradicate sexist roles and stereotypes under the vision and inclusion of gender in educational programs and in the teaching act to promote the principle of equality between the sexes, this is a factor of innovation and educational change as it transforms, (re) designs and (un) mounts the identity and skewed patterns designated by the patriarchal system within the educational, organizational tradition, contents educational curriculum, etc.

Indeed, this article aims to give an overview of critical and analytical of the Spanish educational strategies with a gender perspective, highlighting the pros and cons processes to provide access and equal treatment for all students. Because achieving gender equality must be the result of a free, equal, and unbiased education.

KEYWORDS: educational innovation, gender, university teaching, coeducation, good practices.

* PhD in Gender Studies. Professor at the Department of Public Policy (Universidad de Guadalajara). Specialist in the line: Gender Violence, Equality Policies, Coeducation, New Masculinities and Human Rights.

Email: perla.bramontes@gmail.com

** PhD in Education (Universidad de Guadalajara), Research Professor at the Department of Public Policy of the Universidad de Guadalajara. Specialized studies on university, academics, knowledge production and higher education policies. Email: r_pm2001@yahoo.com

INTRODUCTION

Genre approach is unpredictable now a day in the designing and implementing of the educational policies to guaranty equal access opportunities and teaching to both men and women. The genre analysis allows to visualize, to comprehend, and to intervene in the imposed and unfair sexual hierarchy, where masculine power prevails, positioning women in a submission condition, both salary and educational discrimination, violence, invisibility, and scorn of feminine scientific contributions.

This article pretends to join the discussion on the need to combat these androcentric practices that obstruct the social and professional women development. Starting off the current progress in the regulation mechanisms that give the answer to this legislative socio-cultural-patriarchy problem, the importance of deepening the analysis of these novel mechanisms with a genre perspective is emphasized. The progressthat the Spanish educational system has hadstarting from inserting of the coeducation for genre equality strategy have been mentioned particularly. However, the success of these mechanisms depends on the degree of involvement, cooperation and coordination between the institution and faculty to achieve this goal, besides cultural changes that modify perceptions and practices of the university community. Therefore, the affirmative teaching community participation to create and to be at the forefront of the educational processes for genre equality deserves particular attention given there is still challenges and defiance to face to reach the desired real genre equality.

GENRE EQUALITY: PRIMARY GOAL IN SPAIN AND EUROPE

Since the nineties, the genre equality speech has taken an increasingly prominent role on the European political agenda. There are some regulatory, advocacy, and promotion backgrounds that have laid down the foundations for equal treatment, education, and opportunity for both men and women in Europe. However, despite the existing normative tools that incorporate affirmative actions that are inclusive and egalitarian in the legal and legislative frameworks, real and practical gender equality still fails in consolidating in everyday life, family, work, and education. As a proof of this, sufficient it to mention that women are the majority of the bachelor's degree, University graduates, postgraduate students, who are not able to enter the working field. It is still obvious the job inequality,prevailing insurmountable glass ceiling that prevents women from crossing their goals and promotion to high-level posts,

prevailing invisible barriers associated with the construction of the subjectivity and feminine genre identity that provokes acting processes in detriment professional success (Barberá E., Ramos A. and Sarrió M., 2003, pp. 267-278), besides having lower income than men, even though they develop the same kind of job and working schedule. Therefore, it is necessary to bet for a change that guarantees greater equality, to promote the innovation of strategies to (re) structure the education system with a gender perspective to ensure equal access for men and women to opportunities and labor, personal, cultural and social development Economic. It is necessary to promote mechanisms to strength and to apply the normative and public policies initiatives that have generated and contribute to the processes to eliminate genre inequality.

In this way, teaching becomes an essential aspect of the equality genre education strategy in Spain, due to the perceptions in this sector of masculinity and femininity are crucial for the construction process and appropriation of cultural and social meanings of the students. Given to its significant influence in the cultural pattern transmission from their close and continuous relationship with students, they can become both a positive and adverse factor: *“to generate an equality genre environment at the campuses. Textbooks and reading material that is used in universities can also contribute to increasing, or a counterair, to increase the genre stereotypes”* (Forsthuber B., Horvath A. and Motiejunaite A., 2011, p. 13).

Therefore, duty, commitment, responsibility of the Spanish educational institutions, the faculty and the equality units¹ following the European and national guidelines on equality (LO 3/2007, of March 22th, for the efficient equality of women and men, Comprehensive LO 1/2004, etc.), stress the importance of raising awareness and training of university teaching staff In gender equality, with the aim of inserting gender and feminist epistemology in a transverse and mandatory way into the educational curricula to redouble efforts in the construction of traditional gender roles (imposed and justified by male domination) And sexist stereotypes, which mark and promote gender

¹ At present all Spanish public universities, in their strategic role as creators and transmitters of knowledge, have also included gender equality policies in their educational system as a criterion of quality, through Equality Units to remove the obstacles that impede the Effective equality between men and women and the promotion of full and genuine gender equality. They are inserted more correctly in a higher education system, following the recommendations of Act LO 3/2007, of March 22th, for the practical equality of women and men, which establishes that the Public Administrations, in the exercise of their respective competencies, will promote Teaching and research on the meaning and scope of equality between women and men by promoting: (a) the inclusion, inappropriate curricula, of education on equality between women and men, (b) the creation of postgraduate courses (c) the carrying out of specialized studies and research in this field (Article 25). Thus, as fulfilling the mandate of Organic Law 4/2007, dated April 12th, amending Organic Law 6/2001, of December 21th, Universities, that “universities will have their structures of organization with Units of equality for the development of functions related to the principle of equality between men and women” (twelfth additional provision). Ultimately, the purpose of the Equality Unit is to try to eliminate the difficulties and barriers that prevent equal participation and the personal, academic and professional development of all members of the university community and that the principles of inclusion, plurality, diversity, Equality of opportunity and equity to be realized both inside and outside it, all of this in accordance with the egalitarian democratic State.

inequalities. Gender mainstreaming strategies in the European and Spanish context involve (re) organization, improvement and development of the inclusion of sex equality in the curriculum, in the open professional orientation and without sexism, design (re) educating and sensitizing parents on gender equality issues, continuing teacher training with a gender perspective, promoting and encouraging research on equality between the sexes, and evaluating textbooks and teaching materials that are inclusive and without sexist language; Gender studies and reinforcement of academic networks with a gender perspective, equal enrollment and completion rates, etc., all aimed at promoting greater gender balance and well-being or gender-sensitive policies which includes the mobilization and evolution: *“Systematic of all policies and general measures with the specific purpose of achieving equality, taking into account actively and expressly from the planning stage of systematic forms given their possible effects of this type during the definition phase and during The implementation”* (Commission Europe, 2007b, p. 5).

THE MALE DOMINATION: A SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION

The feminism has made significant epistemology contributions to the conception that we have about our reality. One of the main contributions is the constructive social thinking development, that points out the way how reality is socially constructed, and because of this there is not a single fact, but many that each social and cultural group builds on intersubjectivity and the coexistence of everyday life. In this plurality of social constructions, there has been the phenomenon of imposing the vision of the reality of the most powerful or the strongest over the weakest. Thus, the reality that benefits the capitalist, the religious, military or state power is imposed on various levels, and in particular, for our work, we are interested in emphasizing the way in which the male gender has imposed during many years a social construction of reality that starts from aspects related to dominance, the superiority of the masculine gender and the subordination of the feminine gender. Bourdieu (2000) expresses his surprise at the way in which the established order is perpetuated so quickly and the most intolerable conditions of existence can appear as often as acceptable, if not natural:

I have always seen in masculine domination, and in the way it has been imposed and endured, the best example of that paradoxical submission, a consequence of what I call symbolic violence, violence muffled, insensitive and invisible to its own victims, It exerts essentially through the purely symbolic paths of communication and knowledge, or more precisely of ignorance, recognition or, ultimately, of feeling (Bourdieu, 2010, p. 12).

What feminist epistemology has shown is that the way in which this relationship between men and women has occurred for many years and the way in which social, cultural and coexistence conditions have been established between both genders, beyond to be an immutable objective reality, is a social construction imposed by the masculine gender. Feminism, based on awareness of this, has set the tone for the deconstruction of this way of conceiving reality and from that have drawn the guidelines to promote real equality between men and women.

THE GENRE PERSPECTIVE IN EDUCATION INCLUSION: INNOVATION AND CHANGE FACTORS IN EDUCATIONAL PRACTICES FOR EQUALITY

The inclusion of the genre perspective in education has assumed an innovation and change factor in the educational practices for equality, by proposing the construction of culture and patriarchal traditions. Through the gender perspective, the equality between men and women is seeking and it is considered an essential factor to achieve democracy and patriarchal justice. Education is considered as the primary strategy to transform role models and links that reproduce inequitable and harmful relationships. For an educational system or program to be considered quality or inclusive it must be designed equality genre (Bartolomé M. 2008, pp. 155-187).

The innovation and good educational practices with genre perspective have become a tendency in the last past years to generate greater social-cultural changes through different inclusive and educational public policies under a theoretical and practical perspective of the equality principle, i.e., the perspective genre inclusion in the education proposes to incorporate knowledge and practices which claim *“the right of people to be equal from the difference, introducing an educational agenda to promote real equality between men and women that covers contents or areas of opportunity but also strategies or ways of own actions”* (Rebollo M^a, 2013: 3-8).

A clear example of it, is the faculty implication as the principal actors in the transformation of these educational changes involving students' families to guarantee good educational practices, it is vital to take into account the context, environment, and socio-educational-family fabric surrounding the teaching and learning processes, since family supposes the context of socialization by excellence and, therefore, assumes the role great transcendence in the change towards a coeducational model with genre perspective.

To move forward and start a change on a path towards greater equality, it is necessary to think and to do things differently, that is, to transform structures

and traditional processes, modifying ways of acting and relating, in other words: “to innovate”. The innovation processes can also modify the behavior of educational institutions because includes changes in the organizational culture, associated with the way of working and organizing, promoting a positive transformation in the traditional methods and in the cognitive structures of the people in the organization (Rebollo, Piedra de la Cuadra, Sala, Sabuco, and Bascón, 2012, pp. 129-152).

In these innovation processes, it is possible and necessary to detect good practices, meaning, actions that achieve positive results which can generate an experience for the organization and individuals who are part of it. For an educational training to be valued as a good one, it must be built through processes of continuous and joint reflection and interpretation through the formation of collaborative, coordinated and specialized teaching teams (in gender research of preference) that evaluate and work with their own needs and experiences (Boza and Toscazo, 2011).

In the last decade, several reorganizational strategies and good practices with a gender perspective have been incorporated into the education agenda to consolidate real equality between men and women. Among them we highlight the following:

Obligatory school curriculum: at the primary level includes the recognition of gender differences, the identification of inequalities between men and women, the equality promotion between men and women in the family sphere, and social and labor field, etc. at middle school, the critical assessment of the social and sexual division of labor, the prejudices and the feminization of poverty etc. these contents are structured from feminist epistemology.

Curriculum in higher education: it also addresses and promotes the beginning in gender equality, the non-violence towards women and their empowerment, offering elective courses with gender perspective under theoretical approaches and gender studies investigations. It is important to mention that the higher educational institutions have an obligation to define their equality genre policies with the support of Equality Units and University Institutes of Women’s Studies or Genre.

Professional orientation without segregation: faculty must orient students with a genre perspective at the time of choosing subjects among the different academic disciplines avoiding sex discrimination. Due to, remains the resistance of masculinizing and feminizing specific areas of study according to the traditional roles or stereotypes genres impose by the patriarchal system. i.e., some areas like engineering and science are

widely perceived and accepted as male; therefore, appropriate for men; meanwhile areas like education, health, and social welfare are considered feminine and suitable for women because of its relationship with care and attention. Because of that, it is important to let students know their right to choose without sex discrimination in the areas of study they want and feel vocation.

In this way, as Subirats (2009, pp. 94-97) points out more and more men and women are free to: *“adopt all kinds of roles in life according to their abilities and tastes and a segregated education fosters the old stereotypes of the traditional sexual division, which makes no sense in our society.* This strategy has a clear objective the equality of schooling rates.

Design and evaluation of textbooks and teaching materials with a gender perspective: gender equality as an equalitarian, inclusive, anti-discriminatory and sexist language is introduced in teaching-learning.

Permanent teacher training with a gender perspective: a good educational practice starts from a certain level of previous training, and in this case gender theory is incorporated, to guarantee learning processes with a gender perspective that promotes gender equality and opportunities.

The ICT's in classrooms: an optimal model of teaching and learning that facilitates democratic processes of gender parity. In addition to promoting cooperative work between teachers and students. This tool becomes a great didactic innovation because it allows direct access to digital learning resources. It is the responsibility of teachers to apply and design new methodologies and tasks related to this new instrument, linked to change and educational innovation (Sáez, 2010, pp. 183-204).

COEDUCATION IN HIGHER EDUCATION CURRICULUM

The coeducation is an unpredictable instrument to compensate and balance inequalities that are sexist and discriminatory. Through designing and providing a non-sexist education and equal opportunities for men and women. As well indicated by Blanco (2007, p. 26) coeducation is to educate outside the box:

[...] by educating each and every one for who they are, looking after their difference. When referring to coeducation, the reference is both boys and girls, although in a different way [...] coeducating girls cannot mean taking as a valid reference the one kids already had. For kids, it means rethinking what they already had [...] to rethink what it's like to be a woman, to be a man, in the universal historical context in which we live.

In this way co-education starts from the acceptance of one's gender or gender identity, generating respect and communication between people of different sex, thereby overcoming misogynist and sexist biases. In this same sense, Malo and López (2008, p. 1) point out that each can "build their social identity from a positive and healthy self-concept, promoting communication between people of both sexes" without discrimination because of gender.

In this way, coeducation goes into the processes of socialization and construction of non-sexist social values, having as primary objectives: a) to dismantle the male model as universal; b) correct sexist stereotypes; c) respect gender identities; d) (re) build the school curriculum by eliminating cultural biases still prevalent in society; e) preventing problems of gender violence; f) Provide an inclusive and human rights education that enable individual skills to be developed independently of gender.

Therefore, co-educational work is a function and responsibility that involves the whole educational community: institution, teachers, students, and families, working in a coordinated, cohesive and constructive manner. Indeed, the school is a current reflection of the society in which we inhabit and between both establishes a bilateral relation of causality and co-responsibility. Therefore, the innovation of coeducation in schools or universities acquires a bonus, because they are directly linked to the evolution of society and vice versa. Therefore, it is important to follow the line of educating men and women equally.

Definitely, coeducation, has been placed on a central and essential axis in the educational system to offer: *"the students an integral way, preparing them for a future life respectful, in which there are no gender discriminatory aspects"* (Cabeza, 2010, p. 39). Thus, it is crucial to introduce coeducation in the curriculum to (re) make the system of values and attitudes that are transmitted to promote equal treatment and opportunities. Only coeducation adequately guarantees that students of both sexes visualize confrontations of coexistence and daily sexual conflicts and learn live to solve in a democratic and adequate way the principle of equality and non-discrimination (Alález, 2009, p. 59).

Coeducation in the curriculum involves large interconnected tasks such as: collaborating with the eradication of gender inequalities, being alert to the marked gender bias that crosses the culture, and changing attitudes and values for equality in pedagogical practices includes parity policies to achieve a quality education. As is explicitly recommended by Organic Law of May 3th, Education (2006) where it indicates that the plenary:

Development of the personality and productive capacities of students, training in respect for fundamental rights and freedoms and effective equality of opportunities between men and women, effective sexual recognition,

as well as the critical assessment of inequalities, that allows overcoming the sexist behaviors.

This normative framework re-order all the Educational System introducing new mechanisms in the teaching-learning with the genre perspective to promote the real equality between men and women therefore, points out the recommendation that every campus should incorporate the coeducational principle in every educational stage (additional availability twenty-fifth active equality promotion between men and women in the organic law of May 3th, in education, 2006).

Likewise, we consider important to point out that to introduce coeducation in the curriculum a diagnosis must be promoted to know and visualize thematic contents about the equality reality between men and women, identifying discriminations and stereotypes, with the intention of (re) build them with a genre perspective and eliminate sexist language. The ongoing training of teachers in gender studies and human rights, as well as the degree of coordination and implementation, are an essential core to guarantee an education free of sexist stereotypes in the classroom, i.e. to educate from difference and to develop activities that take students to positive value the development of tasks in equal manner and the development of all professions equally, regardless sex, as well as their contribution to society, to create courses of gender studies, and the visualization and acknowledgment women's scientific work etc.

So, should we (re) consider if teachers can coeducate without actually believing in the equality between men and women and without training in gender studies and human rights? The straightforward and concrete answer is no. As a first step, we must:

[...] change the way we think and act, it cannot be taught what is not believed, in order to coeducate our students, daughters, and sons, definitely, to those who will be the men and women of the future, [...] we all learn more from the example we see rather than theory we are told, both boys and girls as adults. Therefore, we, teachers, mothers and fathers, educators in general, are a clear living example for our children, a reflection of what they must do (Casillas, 2008, p. 65).

Without a question, when teachers are aware, sensitized, and trained in co-education under a feminist and gender epistemology, they will be able to promote the teaching-learning based on the principle of equality with greater implication and knowledge to share an unbiased education and students will acquire and develop in society with of respect, tolerance, equity, justice, equality, nonviolence, and discrimination.

AFFIRMATIVE INVOLVEMENT AND UNIVERSITY TEACHERS CHALLENGES IN THE FIELD OF EQUALITY

The commitment and fight against traditional gender stereotypes by University teachers are undeniable; it is a fact, that genre perspective has been introduced in the educational agenda as a particular and necessary priority. As a proof of that, universities have adopted and designed a political framework to gender equality in their educational curriculum.

However, in the teaching-learning process in the field of gender equality in higher education still represents several challenges for teachers in their teaching and professional performance among them: a) in the school organization there is still no reflection of equal representation in management positions and in the promotion of female teachers to be appointed professors; b) equitable sharing and distribution to the decentralized faculty-researcher to promote and encourage research on gender studies in all scientific areas of knowledge, to reinforce good egalitarian practices in the production of knowledge; c) learning to believe in equality and acting on it, developing a real and exemplary change in the teaching activity that influences in terms favourable for coeducation; d) strengthening academic networks with a national and international gender perspective with a view to enhancing gender equality processes as a result of education and research; e) build a university support network to integrate new teachers who are specialists in gender studies and justice policies; f) further increase the academic and timetable offer of the subjects of equality and gender studies to avoid the limitations to the participation patterns by the students.

CONCLUSIONS

Education is a powerful instrument to the change of attitudes and behaviors. Therefore, educational systems along teachers have in their hands the important role of promoting gender and opportunities equality, is in the classrooms where the fight against sexist stereotypes is fought, besides these must guarantee to both men and women the chance to find out, to accept or to reinforce their own identity, to build their goals and dreams based on their own interests based on harmony and respecting the gender equality principle. For this matter, the coordinated coeducational work will be fundamental, as well as the cooperation of all instructional staff.

To introduce coeducation in higher education institutions is necessary that both teachers and family be aware of the needs and the importance of having equality institutions that meet the democratic parity and justice criteria and that the school curriculum is structured from the coeducational perspective

and students have tools to analyze and reject the biased and discriminatory messages they receive every day and avoid (re) producing them.

For this reason, it is important that family intervene in the coeducation processes because this means speaking and accompanying students in all areas of social and school life, taking into consideration the already existence differences between both men and women because it is necessary to educate inequality from difference and respect.

Finally, we consider that more should be given by the educational institutions on the ongoing training for teachers on gender equality issues since the vast majority of the initiative to specialize or innovate didactic methodologies with a gender perspective depends solely on moral commitment, Ethical and professional teaching staff for being at the forefront and imparting quality education without bias or gender bias; and consistent with public equality policies. Particular attention has been paid to this study to the measures taken by the Spanish government, which undoubtedly present significant advances that can serve as a reference and comparison to evaluate and analyze other national realities, which will allow the advancement of a society with better education systems that Promote gender equity and equality. Since education is undoubtedly a factor of balance in our lives.

REFERENCES

- Aláez, B. (2009). El ideario educativo constitucional como fundamento de la exclusión de la educación diferenciada por razón de sexo de la financiación pública. En *Revista Española de Derecho Constitucional*, N° 86, 39. España: Ministerios de la Presidencia Centro de Estudios Políticos y Constitucionales.
- Barberá, E., Ramos A. y Sarrió M. (2003). Mujeres directivas, espacio de poder y relaciones de género. En *Anuario de Psicología*, Vol. 34, n°, 2. Universidad de Barcelona.
- Bartolomé, M. (2008). Igualdad versus equidad: enfoques divergentes ante la diversidad educativa. En Etxeberria F., Sarasola J., (Coords.). *Convivencia, equidad y calidad*. San Sebastián, España: AIDIPE.
- Bourdieu, P. (2010). *La dominación masculina* (6th ed.). Barcelona, España: Anagrama.
- Boza, A. y Toscazo M. (2011). Buenas prácticas en integración de las TIC en educación en Andalucía: dos estudios de caso. En *VI Congreso Virtual de AIDIPE*. Recuperado el 13 septiembre de 2006 de http://www.uv.es/aidipe/congresos/Ponencia_VII Congreso Virtual_AIDIPE.pdf
- Blanco N. (2007). Coeducar y diferencia sexual. En *Consejería de Educación. Andalucía educativa*, 64. Sevilla, España: Junta de Andalucía.
- Cabeza, A. (2010). Importancia de la coeducación en los centros educativos: En *Revista Pedagogía Magna*, n° 8,

- 39, España: Asociación Sociocultural Mundieduca.
- Castillo, A. (2008). Coeducación: pautas para su desarrollo en los centros educativos. En *Revista Escuela Abierta: revista de investigación educativa del CES*, nº 11, 65, Andalucía, España. Recuperado 1 de septiembre de 2016 de http://www.ceuandalucia.es/escuelaabierta/pdf/articulos_ea11%20pdf/coeducacion%2048_95.pdf
- Comisión Europea (2007b). *Gender equality law in the European Union*. Luxemburgo: Editorial Oficina de Publicaciones Oficiales de las Comunidades Europeas.
- Forsthuber, B., Horvath, A., Motiejunaite, A. (2011). *Diferencias de género en los resultados educativos: medidas adoptadas y situación actual en Europa*. Madrid, España: Editorial Agencia Ejecutiva en el Ámbito Educativo, Audiovisual y Cultura (EACEA P9 Eurydice) y Ministerio de Educación.
- Ley Orgánica de 3 de mayo de Educación (2006).
- Malo J., López G. (2008). La coeducación e igualdad de los sexos en el contexto escolar y en la actividad física de Educación Física según la LOE. En *Revista Digital*, nº 127, 1. Buenos Aires, Argentina. Recuperado el 8 agosto de 2016 de <http://www.efdeportes.com/efd127/la-coeducacion-e-igualdad-de-los-sexos-en-el-contexto-escolar.htm>
- Rebollo, M^a (2013). La innovación educativa con perspectiva de género. Retos y desafíos para el profesorado. En: *Revista de Currículum y Formación de Profesores*, Vol. 17, nº 1, enero-abril, 3-8. Granada, España: Universidad de Granada.
- Rebollo, M^a., Piedra de la Cuadra J., Sala A., Sabuco A. y Bascón M. (2012). La equidad de género en educación: análisis y descripción de buenas prácticas educativas. En: *Revista de Educación*, Vol. 358, 129-152. Andalucía, España: ed. Consejería de Innovación, Ciencias y Empresa de la junta de Andalucía.
- Subirats, M. (2009). La escuela mixta ¿garantía de coeducación? En *Revista Educando en Igualdad, La educación, factor de igualdad*, 11, 94-97. Recuperado el 2 de agosto de 2016 de <http://www.uclm.es/varios/revistas/docenciainvestigación/pdf/número10/7.pdf>
- Sáez, J. (2010). Utilización de las TIC en el proceso de enseñanza aprendizaje, valorando la incidencia real de las tecnologías en la práctica docente. En *Revista Docente e Investigación*, ISSN:1113-9926, 183-204. Recuperado el 20 de septiembre de agosto de 2016 de <http://www.uclm.es/varios/revistas/docenciainvestigaciones/pdf/numero10/7.pdf>