

Education and Gender

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At the beginning of 1872, the conservative minister Abdón Cifuentes issued the very controversial decree on the freedom of examinations for private schools, which certainly had nothing to do with women. The measure was quickly repealed, the minister fell, and with that, the remainder of the liberal-conservative merger was ended, giving way to the government of the liberal alliance. However, during the short validity of the decree something unexpected happened. The principal of a secular, private school, **Antonia Tarragó**, asked the university to admit her students to take valid entrance exams.

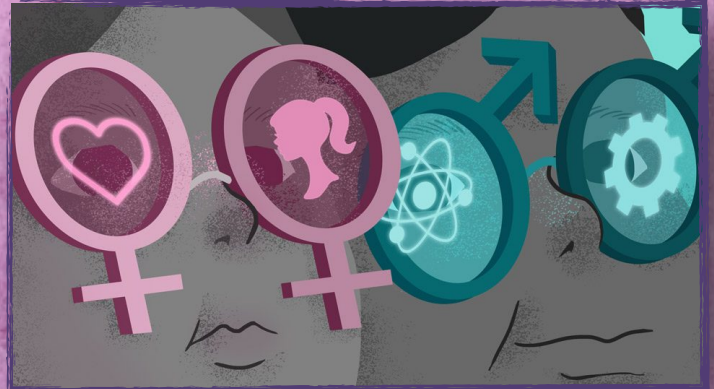
Strictly speaking, no law prohibited it, but the prevailing culture supposed that it did. The University Council agreed (to the request), but the resolution had to be taken by the minister and, finally, three years later and at the insistence of the applicant and of **Isabel Le Brun**, also head of school, the request was accepted. Finally, in 1877, Miguel Luis Amunátegui, as minister of the department, signed the decree that allowed women to enter the university. In memory it has remained a great liberal triumph and for that reason since then it has been called the Amunátegui Decree, **but strictly and fairly it should be called the Tarragó-Le Brun Decree.** (Serrano, Ponce de León y Rengifo, 2012, pp. 378-379)

This quote reflects the purpose of gender issues since it highlights the participation of women in the historical formation of

National States, making their contribution to the processes of cultural transformation visible. And in particular, it shows the social commitment of two school directors who, in their desire to broaden the academic expectations of their students, allowed women, for the first time, to enter Higher Education. Now, if the "Royal University of San Felipe was founded in Santiago in 1747, it began its teaching activities in 1758 (...) and consisted of five faculties: theology, philosophy, law, medicine and mathematics" (Museo Histórico Nacional[National Museum of History], sf, p.2), it took 119 years for two visionary teachers to generate a paradigm shift in the traditional mindset.

In this sense, gender perspectives analyze the cultural construction of sexual difference that is mediated by political wills, current legislation, social relations, generic expressions and communicative interactions between women, between men and between women and men in everyday life. This network frames the academic aspirations, the differentiating attributes and the identity experiences or sexual orientations that they express in the public and private sphere (Lamas, 2003; Lizana, 2014). Likewise, the network in question configures the power relations that organize the participation of people in organizations, groups and sectors of society, where gender issues and problems vary from culture to culture and their criteria change generationally or are transformed through time (Lamas, 1996; MINEDUC, 2015). Therefore, the cultural construction of sexual difference is evident in the indices of political representation of women and men; in the labor market segregated or divided by sex; on gender equity and inequity in national education systems; in the sale or suppression of material and symbolic goods in the kinship systems; in the hereditary rights of the family nuclei; in sexist discrimination in pension systems, just to mention some relevant aspects.

In this way, power relations are explicitly and implicitly expressed in social, political, legislative, judicial, educational and family institutions, whose gender socialization makes visible the roles “worthy of being desired, aspired to or longed for” by the next generation of citizens. This symbolic dream machinery supposes the consent of those over whom power is exercised, a machinery that will be more effective, permanent and transversal if the primary and secondary groups “naturalize, make invisible or extrapolate” the biological, sexual or anatomical difference to the different spaces and fields of action.



Likewise, gender socialization distinguishes “intrinsically feminine or masculine” functions, either by attributing a certain discursive legitimacy to their reproductive or productive character; endorsing them with value, status, prestige or recognition of their material, existential, labor and salary conditions, among others; or transferring a burden, trade, work, profession not always appealing and desirable.

At the macro and micro levels, power dynamics is an implicit and inherent characteristic of social, political, educational, family and gender relations (RAE, 2019). Consequently, each person is part of this dynamic when they sustain, exercise or (re)produce some control and dominance mechanism in an area of daily life, bearing in mind that “(...) where there is more power [there will] be greater resistance” (Foucault, 1992, p.165). In these paradoxes, ambiguities and asymmetries are framed the social needs, academic expectations, professional opportunities and personal interests of girls, boys, adolescents and young people. Those who will inherit the logics of action from their reference groups and carry their dreams, desires, hopes and dreams for testamentary, legal or customary provisions (Alcaldía de Medellín, 2014).

It is fair to say that, educational institutions are fundamental in the construction of academic aspirations, differentiating attributes and identity experiences in their leading actors, who establish intergeneric power relations between women and men, as well as intrageneric relations between women and between men. These normative dynamics “(...) delimit what is considered appropriate, allowed and valued for each sex” (MINEDUC, 2015, p.9). In other words, they strengthen certain knowledge, skills and attitudes in the students, encouraging or discouraging the development of some disciplinary fields and areas of activity, considering them more appropriate or less convenient for them. There are those, however, who learn to estimate or dismiss their own skills in certain specific curricular areas, either because they feel capable or incapable of doing something or because they have the strength and the will to do it.

For this reason, it is relevant to examine the pedagogical material of a virtual course of the CPEIP¹ aimed at teachers in professional practice in the Orientation area, which establishes a comparative table between boys and girls of third year elementary in Emotional and Social areas. This curriculum content suggests that boys show great interest in computer games, sports and sports idols; they need more space and movement to express themselves or to fight with their peers; they find it difficult to abide by rules and express their feelings. At the same time, it shows that girls are interested in stickers, albums, singers and teenage idols; they need to be with friends because they are less independent; they prefer to attract men's attention as a new form of self-expression; they are calmer and easily express their feelings. This information was classified as sexist on social networks, so the ministerial portfolio published an official statement removing this material and expressing its commitment to gender equality and equal opportunities between women and men (Online Newspaper “El Dínamo”, 2020).



"The Educators" created by Samuel Román Rojas and inaugurated on April 13, 1946, in Alameda Bernardo O'higgins with Calle Dieciocho. (18th Street). Santiago, Chile.

¹ Centro de Perfeccionamiento, Experimentación e Investigaciones Pedagógicas del Ministerio de Educación de Chile [Center for Development, Experimentation and Pedagogical Research of the Chilean Ministry of Education].

Consequently, educational actors participate explicitly and implicitly in the sociopolitical organization of hegemonic, complicit, subordinate and marginalized masculinities and femininities (Connell cited in Valdés and Olavarria, 1997), whose power dynamics and normative parameters are inscribed in epistemological, theoretical, scientific, ideological or religious doctrines that categorically and unequivocally affirm the cultural meaning and literal meaning of “what it means to be a woman” and “what it means to be a man” (Lamas, 1996). This is demonstrated by Cristeva Cabello in the book *Mayo feminista. La rebelión del patriarcado* [May Feminist. The Rebellion Against The Patriarchy] (2018):

A high school activist shares with me a “certificado de convivencia escolar” [School Report Card] from her women's college where they rated the behavior of the students. One of the qualification criteria is “Ethical Training” and one of its items qualifies if the student “Values her quality as a woman with feminine attitudes”. The teacher's grade was “GENERALLY”, that is, she did not reach the ideal which was “ALWAYS”. That is to say, this adolescent did not fulfill that ethical commitment towards the female form. (p.24)

In this regard, the Unidad de Equidad de Género [Gender Equity Unit] (UEG, 2014) of the Ministry of Education seeks to incorporate gender issues and problems into educational policies and programs, in order to “(...) advance a quality and inclusive public education that allows for the integral and equitable development of the students” (MINEDUC, 2015, p.7). It is about designing and implementing a non-sexist

education that values their competences at different levels, subjects or disciplinary areas, regardless of their sex-body-sexuality, gender identity, preference or sexual orientation. This type of education addresses “(...) the role of androcentrism in science, language, the invisibility of women in history, the interaction between the sexes in the classroom and the values learned (INMUJERES, 2007, p.57). Such challenges involve analyzing the socialization spaces of educational institutions, the communication channels of the community or parity in the political participation and decision-making of its leading actors. As well as this, it is necessary to evaluate the conditions for accessing the managerial positions and performing the teaching functions, examining the cultural relevance of the coexistence manuals and the gender markers of the conduct and dress regulations (Cabello cited in Zerán, 2018).



Furthermore, it is essential to critically observe national and international evaluations. For example, the SIMCE², PISA (OCDE)³ and TERCE (OREALC/UNESCO)⁴ tests show a significant difference in Language and Communication in favor of women. On the other hand, PISA and TIMSS (IEA)⁵ show an obvious distance in favor of men in Mathematics. At the same time, the SIMCE, PISA and TERCE tests show a progressive deepening in the differences for reasons of sex-gender, social class and ethnicity-race, an asymmetry that is accentuated as students progress in their school careers. In addition, women obtain the best results in elementary and secondary education, and men achieve the highest scores in the PSU⁶ test in the areas of Mathematics, Science and History. That is, they exceed 550 points, making up 70% that exceed 750⁷, on the other hand, women mostly obtain less than 550 points (DEMRE, 2020; MINEDUC, 2015, 2020).

In general terms, stereotypes adopt a simplistic, conventional and immutable character, making visible representations, images and ideas that are commonly accepted as true by educational communities (RAE, 2019). And in particular, "(...) sexual stereotypes reflect popular beliefs about the activities, roles, traits, characteristics or attributes that characterize and distinguish women from men" (INMUJERES, 2007, p. 62). For example, it is striking to note the high masculinization in General Inspection (57%) and Management (44%); and the high feminization in classroom teaching (74%) and in the technical-

pedagogical team (74%). That is to say, the managerial positions are occupied by men, although there is a greater endowment of women in educational institutions. On the teaching levels, Early Childhood Education (99.5%) and Special Education (95%) present a high feminization, while Professional Technical Middle Education (50%) and Scientific-Humanistic Middle Education (42%) set a trend towards masculinization. Regarding the subjects, female teachers are mainly in language, orientation, social programs and projects, and clothing; and male teachers in physical education, mathematics, science, technology, mechanics, and electricity (MINEDUC, 2014, 2015).



In other words, culture imposes androcentric values when it shares the belief that what is done by men, heroes or heroes of history is synonymous with what is done by humanity; or when social actors consider that masculinity is the center, factor or parameter necessary to measure all things (Lledó, 1992, 2016). This ideological

conception promotes the conditions of subordination, contempt or discrimination towards women for their sex (Cortada, 1993). For these reasons, non-sexist education asks: Why does the masculine order dispense with any justification? Why is it imposed as a neutral, objective, normal, invisible and unquestionable force? Why is this ideological vision considered important in itself, generating its own discursive legitimacy? (Bourdieu, 2000).

² Tests administered by the Agencia de Calidad de la Educación del Ministerio de Educación de Chile [Educational Quality Agency of the Chilean Ministry of Education].

³ Tests of the Program for the International Evaluation of Students from the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD).

⁴ Tercer Estudio Regional Comparativo y Explicativo [Third Regional Comparative and Explanatory Study] of the Regional Office of Education for Latin America and the Caribbean.

⁵ International Study of Trends in Mathematics and Sciences of the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement.

⁶ Prueba de Selección Universitaria [University Selection Test] administered by the Departamento de Evaluación, Medición y Registro Educacional [Department of Evaluation, Measurement and Educational Registry] (DEMRE) of the Universidad de Chile [University of Chile].

⁷ The standard score for each PSU test has a common scale ranging from 150 to 850 points. .

In this way, gender gaps make visible the qualitatively substantive and statistically significant differences between women and men with similar sociodemographic characteristics, both in their possibilities to enter, stay and graduate from educational institutions, as well as their learning outcomes in the different disciplinary areas. According to the Ministry of education, such differences persist in Special Education, Professional Technical Middle Education and Higher Education (MINEDUC, 2014, 2015):

•Special Education: This area mainly attends to boys (60.8%) rather than girls (39.2%), as they present special educational needs permanently or temporarily in a greater proportion.

•Professional Technical Middle Education: In this sector, men predominate and especially in the Industrial (83%), Agricultural (66%) and Maritime (65%) areas, while women (44.9%) are concentrated in the Technical (80%), Commercial (64%) and Artistic (53%) areas. According to the available information, this sector has high levels of desertion due to economic factors, pregnancy and entry into the world of work.

•Higher Education: In this sector, a high feminization is observed in health, design and social sciences careers; and a high masculinization in science and mathematics. At the same time, in Professional Technical Education, women are concentrated in secretariat, nursery education, nursing and social services; and males in construction and maintenance, surveying, systems analysis, electronics and automotive engineering.

From this perspective, the Early Childhood Educators and teachers of Elementary Education, Professional Technical Middle Education, Scientific Humanist Middle Education and Higher Education require sensitive training in cross-cutting themes and problems. Those which, on the one hand, show the sexist, classist, racist, xenophobic, homophobic or transphobic biases that underlie the curricular content, teaching practices, methodological strategies, teaching resources, learning processes, situations and assessment instruments. And on the other, those which show asymmetric relationships in the opportunities granted to girls, boys, adolescents and young people during their training trajectories (Lizana, 2007, 2015, 2016). An asymmetry that lasts over time, as stated by Cecilia Richards in the book *The challenge of learning... The challenge of teaching. Stories for a fairer education* (2017):

Socioeconomic differences by gender are maintained, because in eighteen years of study, men receive close to 1,800,000 pesos and women do not exceed 1,100,000 pesos. A woman, being a university graduate, earns on average 400 thousand pesos less than a man and if they have a postgraduate degree, the figure increases to 600 thousand pesos. 45.4% of men specialize in engineering and technology, while only 10.9% of women work in this field. On the other hand, women are concentrated in sectors such as education, with 21%, or economic sciences, with 25.3%. Men, meanwhile, do so in 7.9% and 20.3%, respectively, in these sectors (p.21)

These gaps measure the equity of the National Education System, whose principles are associated with social justice, equal opportunities, and recognition of collective and individual differences (Fraser, 1995). Equity guarantees respect for Human Rights, which, on the one hand, requires dealing with difference when it becomes injustice, inequality or discrimination due to the design and implementation of social, economic, health and educational policies. And on the other, it demands “taking charge” of the gaps derived from the conditions of social class, ethnicity-race and sex-gender, so that all people can carry out their life projects, regardless of their origin and condition. Both aspects constitute an ethical imperative that organizes the distribution of resources, productive assets and available wealth in order to guarantee social rights and, above all, the right to education.

Therefore, the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals are an opportunity for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC, 2016) and the Gender Equity Unit of the Ministry of Education (MINEDUC, 2015) to seek to guarantee quality, equity and equal opportunities between women, between men and between women and men. So that the next generation of citizens enter, stay and graduate from educational institutions with the necessary skills to gain employment, a job, profession or trade. So how do we transform our sexist, homophobic, classist, and racist thoughts, comments, and practices? How do we understand objectivity in the construction of knowledge? How do we make visible the variable social class, ethnicity-race and sex-gender in our research projects? How do we empower women and men to be democratic and transformational leaders? How do we guarantee inclusive, equitable and quality education in our classroom?



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Editing Director: Verónica Lizana M.

Diagramming: Catalina Ahumada D.

Traslation: David Fowler.