



Mixed-sex schools? Co-education? A historical challenge in the education of boys and girls¹

Escola mista? Coeducação? Um desafio histórico para a educação de meninos e meninas

École mixte ? Coéducation? Un défi historique pour l'éducation des garçons et des filles

¿escuela mixta? ¿coeducación? Un reto histórico para la educación de niños y niñas

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ABSTRACT

The article outlines a panorama of women's education in Brazil, presenting factors that have led the Brazilian school landscape to be largely mixed-sex, discussing the concept of mixed-gender schools and gender-based education. The study was based on a bibliographical survey chiefly on the areas of History of Education, Sociology and History. It looks at the fact that mixed-sex schooling does not mean the offer of undifferentiated education for both genders and reflects on the possibility of the school environment being established as a space that contributes to gender equality. The text infers the importance of a close examination of the education system and its different instances and of the subjects that frequent educational environments. Reflecting on the importance of equal education calls for, among other things, thought on the instruction made available (or not) to men and women over time, and in this sense the history of Education is something of great importance.

Keywords: Mixed-sex schools; Gender equality; Women's education.

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RESUMO

O artigo traça um panorama da educação feminina no Brasil, apresenta fatores que levaram a paisagem escolar brasileira ser majoritariamente mista, discutindo o conceito de escola mista e escolarização diferenciada por sexo. Foi produzido com base em levantamento bibliográfico das áreas História da Educação, Sociologia e História, prioritariamente. Constata que escola mista não significa a oferta de uma escolarização não diferenciada por sexo e reflete sobre a possibilidade de o ambiente escolar constituir-se como um espaço contributivo para a igualdade de gêneros. O texto infere a importância de um olhar atento para o sistema educacional e suas diferentes instâncias e para sujeitos que frequentam os ambientes educativos. Refletir sobre a importância de uma educação igualitária exige, entre outros fatores, pensar sobre a instrução disponibilizada (ou não) para homens e mulheres ao longo do tempo, nesse sentido a História da Educação é espaço de grande importância.

Palavras-chave: Escola mista; Igualdade de gêneros; Educação feminina.

RÉSUMÉ

Cet article propose un panorama de l'éducation féminine au Brésil, il présente des facteurs qui ont provoqué un paysage scolaire brésilien de majorité mixte en discutant le concept d'une école mixte et la scolarisation différenciée par sexe. Il a été produit à partir d'un bilan bibliographique des domaines de l'Histoire de l'Éducation, de la Sociologie et de l'Histoire, prioritairement. Il constate que l'école mixte ne signifie par l'offre d'une scolarisation non différenciée par sexe et propose une réflexion sur la possibilité de l'environnement scolaire être un lieu contributif pour l'égalité des genres. Le texte infère l'importance d'un regard attentif sur le système éducatif et ses différentes instances et sur les sujets qui fréquentent les environnements éducatifs. Réfléchir sur l'importance d'une éducation égalitaire exige, parmi d'autres facteurs, penser sur l'instruction offerte (ou non) aux hommes et aux femmes tout au long du temps, dans ce sens l'Histoire de l'Éducation est un lieu de grande signification.

Mots-clés : École mixte; Égalité de genres; Éducation féminine.

RESUMEN

Este artículo muestra un panorama de la educación femenina en Brasil, presenta factores que llevaron a que el paisaje escolar brasileño fuese mayoritariamente mixto, discutiendo el concepto de escuela mixta y escolarización diferenciada por sexo. Ha sido elaborado con base en levantamiento bibliográfico de las áreas de Historia de la Educación, Sociología e Historia, principalmente. Constata que escuela mixta no significa la oferta de una escolarización no diferenciada por sexo y reflexiona sobre la posibilidad de que el ambiente escolar se constituya como un espacio que contribuye a la igualdad de los géneros. El texto infiere la importancia de una atenta mirada hacia el sistema educacional y sus diferentes instancias y hacia sujetos que frecuentan los ambientes educativos. Reflexionar sobre la importancia de una educación igualitaria exige, entre otros factores, pensar sobre la instrucción que se pone (o no) a disposición de hombres y mujeres a lo largo del tiempo, en ese sentido, la Historia de la Educación es un espacio de gran importancia.

Palabras-clave: Escuela mixta; Igualdad de géneros; Educación femenina.

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Introduction

There are few Brazilian schools known to offer gender-differentiated instruction. Colégio São Bento, in the city of Rio de Janeiro, is a good example of a single-sex school in Brazil. Therefore, writing in defense of *co-education* may seem out of place. But is it really?

Rosenberg (2012, p.352) argues that women's increased access to school education did not in fact mean "[...] an equal opportunity to every woman including the experience of co-education". The author points out that the old school sexual segregation left such marks in teaching that this is reflected in curricula. According to her, there has been informal sexual segregation taking place even in co-ed schools since the 1970s.

Regarding the *hidden curriculum* (APPLE, 1982, 1989), Rosenberg (2012) recalls that the curriculum symbolically enacts what is suitable or not for men and women on social places. This is reinforced by Canotilho, Magalhães and Ribeiro (2010, 171), who emphasize that school culture is divided according to gender and other social inequalities ("race", ethnicity, sexual orientation, body appearance, intellectual and physical capacity). According to the authors, this division pervades representations of the teachers themselves about what is suitable or not for boys and girls regarding their roles as professionals and citizens. In addition, they point out that there is interference over values and conceptions transmitted to male and female students through the so-called *hidden curriculum*.

At a first glance, the same education seems to be offered for boys and girls in a mixed-gender school. However, even though under the same umbrella, *curriculum* and *teaching and management practices* have provided their students with gender-differentiated instruction. Due to this finding, in a political and intentional endeavor, *co-ed school* or *co-ed teaching* has been regarded as the *instruction* of men and women within the same physical and temporal space. In a broader sense, co-education refers to a mixed school, concerned with providing egalitarian and quality education for both sexes (AUAD, 2006)².

In this text, therefore, the term co-education is used as a synonym for mixed-gender school, and *co-education* (in italics) is the option when referred to mixed-gender schools oriented to egalitarian and quality education for both genders. This differentiation reinforces that women's access and accomplishment in the school system is more than a struggle today. What is called for is a mixed-gender school which delivers quality education, without any ethnic-racial or socio-economic discrimination, and without different content and pedagogy bias towards men or women according to hegemonic masculine or feminine ideals (ROSENBERG, 2012, p.339).

Co-education is believed to be among the primary elements to achieve a democratic reality, which stems from more egalitarian relations. The pursuit of *co-education* is a significant aspect of the effort towards an ideal of educational praxis for democracy³ and towards the implementation of an education program aimed at human rights training.

²It is worth reflecting on the spelling of these terms and the implication of these differences in terms of deeper meaning. In her PhD thesis (2004) and in the book *Educating Girls and Boys: Gender Relations in School* (2006), Brazilian author Daniela Auad proposed the spelling 'co-educação' in order to strengthen the debate on the subject of education and gender relations. In Portuguese, the correct spelling would be *coeducação* for the instruction of boys and girls, while the prefix "co-", with the hyphen, would emphasize the sense of togetherness. The author's thesis and book predate the orthographic reform in Brazil, after which the correct spelling would have to be 'co-educação'. It is important, however, to emphasize the intentional use of a differentiated spelling, as a way of drawing attention to the issue of education and gender equality.

³See Benevides (1996 and 1998) for the subject of Education for Democracy and for the difference between Democratic Education and Education for Democracy.

The pursuit of *co-education* may also include a contributory factor to alleviate issues such as domestic violence, femicide⁴, homophobia and intergenerational tension. This way, this pursuit allows the exercise of seeing one another as well as oneself in a more humane way; contributes to the acknowledgment of different masculinities⁵ and femininities; and enables the development of subjectivities leading to happier and more fulfilled men and women.

Like Araújo (2005: 48), it is believed the greatest achievement of the feminist project *Equality in Difference* is the possibility of changing gender relations:

This has allowed men to free themselves from the weight of machismo and women to free themselves from the feminine imperative; both of them are allowed to be sensitive, objective, strong, insecure, dependent, independent, free and autonomous, not following categorical imperatives determined by gender. This is how the idea of gender materializes as a social construction. In this perspective, the reconstruction of the feminine necessarily leads to the reconstruction of the masculine. This relationship will never be a relationship without conflict; on the contrary, it will always be a space of struggle and dialectical tension, where different powers and desires are at stake. Thus, it is important that men and women in their subjective experiences are able to exercise logic, reason, intuition and sensitivity to build new values and new ways of relating in all social relations, such as one's affective sexual life, marriage, family and work.

According to Waiselfisz and Maciel (2012), Brazil occupies the seventh position in the femicide ranking, which comprises a list of 84 countries, and these crimes usually happen within the domestic sphere. According to "Domestic Women's Alternative and Response" (UMAR, 2008, p. 1), the feminist movement in Portugal, domestic violence is the leading cause of death and disability among women aged 16-44 and their roots lie in the inequality between men and women, which persist due to gender stereotypes and prejudice.

School is considered as one possible sphere of action, in an effort to aim at a less sexist reality. To this end, Auad's view (2003, p.140) cannot be challenged when she states: "There is no education for democracy without co-education. Thus, even though *co-education* is a practical regulative idea, only its pursuit can turn a school into an institution committed to ending inequalities". For UMAR (2008, p.1), "education for equality/parity is key since kindergarten, from group play, leadership roles, dynamics and games, to the highest levels of higher education". As Souza-Leite (2009, p. 34) warns, "[...] the conquest of citizenship involves the awareness that sexuality inhabits a political body".

The school space as an environment of human interaction and reflection may lead to investments in pedagogical praxis committed to encouraging citizenship and humanitarian values and that becomes an effective place to exercise democratic coexistence. After all, as

⁴Femicides: homicides in which the victims are women and whose causes are related to gender reasons. In these crimes, the victim is killed for being a woman, and is associated with misogyny. The term feminicide also exists. It is usually used as a synonym of femicide. Within this subject, Pasinato (2011), Correa (1981 e 1983) and Engel (2000)'s approaches are worth mentioning.

⁵On masculinities/male issue, see: Tolson (1977), Welzer-Lang (2001), Jablonski (1995), Oliveira (1998), Nolasco (1995) and Joaquim (2010).

Andrades (2010, 251) points out: "We are learning that without equality we lose everyone, men and women"⁶.

To this end, studies and investigations related to the history of education are of utmost importance. Science should be used to explain the reasons to invest or not in the education of diverse people in different spaces and time frames; to analyze the means and discourses that permeate diverse educational spaces; and to reflect on school in the social imaginary as an example of a social construction of reality (BERGER; LUCKMANN, 2010). Moreover, as Freitas points out (2013, 68), these studies warn that "[...] imaginary bricks are as responsible for building the school as the unmistakable tracing of their inner territories".

Reflecting on the possibility of egalitarian education requires thinking about the instruction available (or not) to men and women over time. Likewise, it raises questions about the kind of education that might be attainable for different men and women.

1. Women's education and mixed-gender schools in Brazil

In the early days of Portuguese colonization, teaching was entrusted to and concentrated in the hands of religious orders, especially those of the Jesuits - their teaching aimed at catechesis and at the education of a colonial elite. In this period, women had little access to formal education: most did not know how to read or write. Only a small proportion of women, usually belonging to the elite, could read⁷. Writing was an uncommon skill among the female population. Carvalho (2011, p. 23) writes: "[...] in the colony, a woman being taught to read would only be seen in the images of Sant'Ana Mestra teaching Our Lady".

Women's education took place in their private world, their homes. The few girls who received any formal instruction were taught by a relative, by preceptors or even in convents as of the seventeenth century. Convents were catholic religious institutions dedicated to young women's education for religious contemplation and marriage or to their custody and punishment. (ALGRANTI, 1993)

In Brazil, convents date from the seventeenth century. They are seen as dual spaces, representing either imprisonment and punishment or a getaway from predestination faced by women of the time (forced marriage, maternity, little or no education). Convents are feminine places, where many of their inhabitants were locked up and where many women were prevented from going to.

Convents represented a possibility for women's education, but this did not mean their purpose was to receive applicants or to be an educational space for transgressors concerning society's expectations for women at that time. According to Novais (1984, p.19), "until 1811 there were five convents in Brazil, one in Bahia, two in Rio de Janeiro and two in São Paulo."

The hegemonic ideal for women was actually not feasible or extensive to all in Colonial Brazil:

⁶ Free translation of the original: "*Estamos aprendiendo que sin igualdad perdemos todas las personas, hombres y mujeres*". In this text the term *equality* refers to what is included in the proposal of democratic citizenship. As Benevides (1998, p.140 and 141) states: "[...] equality is not supposed to be uniformity of all human beings with their healthy differences of race, ethnicity, sex, occupation, specific talents, religion and political choice, culture in the broadest sense. [...]. Differences do not necessarily mean inequalities".

⁷ See Rosemberg and Pinto (1985) and Rosemberg, Piza and Montenegro (1990) for women's education. In addition to the authors' considerations, these works present a study of art on this theme.

[...] with regard to families in Colonial Brazil, the patriarchal model would soon come to mind: that of an extended family, comprising blood relatives, in-laws and protégés, under the undisputed leadership of a male figure. The patriarchal family had great importance, which influenced even [...] the relationship between society and the State. But it was typical of the ruling class, [...]. Among people of lower classes, the extended family did not exist, and women tended to have greater independence whenever they had no husband or partner. In 1804 Ouro Preto, for example, out of 203 households, only 93 were headed by men. Even in elite families, a structure of submissive women had exceptions. They played an important role in economic activities under certain circumstances. (FAUSTO, 1996. p. 43)

Fausto's (1996) remarks do not lighten the weight of male power and laws on women. Instead, they lead to the inference of spaces for *insubordination and resistance* and the female reality of daily struggle for survival. This struggle has occurred without the same legal guarantees that benefit the male universe, regardless of official and religious social organizations, historically forged in androcentrism.

From the Pombalinas Reforms (1750-1777) on, opening royal schools for girls was allowed, but they were not taught alongside boys. Schools for boys and schools for girls had been planned. In these schools, the teacher should be of the same sex as the student audience, and there should be a different curriculum.

With the Independence of Brazil (1822), the only records found which concerned basic education and teacher education regarded male teachers. In 1835, a Normal School was created to teach the Lancaster Method or Mutual Teaching, aimed at male teacher education (BASTOS, 2005a and 2005b).

The Constitution of 1824 (article 178/32) states that primary education should be free to all citizens. This resolution was put forward in 1827 through the General Law of Education, dated October 15. It was the first legal instrument to regulate the national public education. For elementary education, curriculum and differentiated schools were defined according to the sex of the child: the boys should be taught reading, writing, counting and the four mathematical operations as well as *notions of geometry*. The girls, however, should be taught reading, writing, counting and the four mathematical operations as well as *embroidery and sewing*.

The October 15, 1827 Act says: "In every city, town and inhabited place there will be as many elementary schools as necessary"⁸. Reality, however, did not reflect this legal requirement. Few children had access to schooling, because the state had not build enough schools to meet the demands in population numbers (MANOEL, 1996). To corroborate this finding, it is sufficient to recall that in 1872, half a century after the Proclamation of Independence of Brazil, only 16% of the population was literate. Carvalho (2011) also points out the lack of interest in the education of slave persons and the absence of a religious reason for being educated, since the Catholic Church did not encourage the practice of reading the Bible.

⁸The October 15, 1827 Act was the first to provide for the creation of public schools for girls (DUARTE, 2003). However, the local authorities had to deliberate regarding their need to exist. Teachers and students should be of the same sex. The decision for an equal salary for male and female teachers was found to be an advance for that time (article 13). It is worth mentioning, however, that this is a rhetorical advance, since this equality did not happen in practice. Teaching geometry guaranteed an increase in teacher's base salary. However, since this content was banned to girls, female teachers received lower salaries than their male counterparts. (SAFFIOTI, 2013).

During this period, female education had been gaining increasing importance within families of the Brazilian elite due to its association with public exposure, a kind of social showcase. "No longer limited to giving birth to babies and managing the household, elite women began to take relevant roles in maintaining social networks and alliances among families" (HABNER, 2012, p.56). The daughters of representatives of the Brazilian elite received education aimed at socializing: speaking French, talking politely, behaving with elegance and refinement and playing the piano.

In the year 1832, there were very few educated female Brazilians, and the number of those who engaged in writing was even lower. Even printed publications in circulation which aimed at the feminine public were mostly managed by men. Among the few women who wrote during the imperial period were Minas Gerais-born Beatriz Francisca de Assis Brandão (1779-1860), Rio Grande do Sul-born Clarinda da Costa Siqueira (1818-1867) and Delfina Benigna da Cunha (1791- 1857) and Rio Grande do Norte-born Nisia Floresta, who published her first book in 1832, *Direitos das Mulheres e Injustiça dos Homens* (Women's Rights and Men's Injustice, in free translation). Few women were blessed with differentiated education compared to that offered to the female population in general. These women extended their gifts of knowledge to other women: "[...] they opened schools, published books, challenged the current opinion that women did not need to know how to read or write" (DUARTE, 2003, p.15).

During the imperial period there were constant gaps between what was envisaged in legislation for education and reality. There was not enough investment in building and maintaining schools. The provincial governments found expenses with education to be high. From this period on, governments found a way to meet the demand for schooling with mixed-gender classes: "Teachers were allowed to teach boys up to a certain age, usually between 12 and 14 years old. This opened up a new field for female primary teaching: male/mixed-gender teaching"(STAMATTO, 2002, p.6)⁹.

The process of relating the profession of a primary teacher with mothering was a development of this opening. Based on the views of that time, motherhood was a woman's natural destiny and their primary function, therefore nothing more appropriate than having female teachers teach children, a natural development of being a mother (SCOTT, 2012). At the end of the imperial period, there were mixed-gender classes in Brazil offered at Protestant schools or in public schools. However, education differentiated by sex was still encouraged, so girls still had fewer opportunities in the labor market and less social ascension when outside marriage.

The process of urbanization and modernization experienced in Brazil since 1870, along with the end of slave labor, brought new insights to the education of the Brazilian population¹⁰. One concern in the educational field was the number and the quality of teachers¹¹. In the final decade of the imperial period, several projects aimed at public

⁹Mixed-gender schools for children faced resistance and debate. Just as in other Catholic-majority countries, the option for mixed-gender schools is not said to have its roots in the social meaning of such a decision. Instead, its origins are economic. (SAFFIOTI, 2013)

¹⁰The Electoral Reform of 1881 determined that an elector needed to be literate to be able to vote. This determination led to a decrease in the number of voters and a greater weight to the urban electorate (DA COSTA, 2010). According to Paiva et. al. (2012, p.67), "... for men and women, as well as for the free and for the enslaved, the levels of education were sensitive to the movement of urbanization". According to the authors, the census of 1872 showed that the *Brazilian literate population* consisted of 1,565,454 people, of which 1,564,051 were free (1,013,078 men and 550,973 women) and 1,403 enslaved (958 men and 445 women). The Brazilian population was 9,930,478. On this subject, see also Oliveira (2003).

¹¹The number of men attracted to the teaching profession had been reducing due to low earnings and other work opportunities that arose as a result of advances in the urbanization process. In addition, the number of women working as teachers did not meet the demand of the teaching profession. The 1872 census showed 18 female teachers in the city of São Paulo and 313 in the city of Rio de Janeiro (BESSE, 1999, p. 125).

schooling were proposed by Brazilian politicians¹². One of them was Leôncio de Carvalho (1879). This politician put forward a bill which, despite restricted to the Court, represented an attempt to reorganize education and even encouraged the building of normal schools and the entry of women into these schools (SAVIANI, 2013)¹³.

Regarding Primary Education, the Leôncio de Carvalho Reform (1879) regulated mixed-gender education for children up to 10 years old; decided that this form of education should last no longer than four years; and divided it into primary and secondary school. In primary school, girls could take *Sewing Foundations*, besides the common subjects. In secondary school, there was a common curriculum to all student body, which included specific subjects for each sex: *Notions of Domestic Economy* and *Needlework* for girls, and *Notions of Social Economy* and *Manual Crafts* for boys (MACHADO, 2005).

The Leôncio de Carvalho Reform (1879) was contrasted with Rui Barbosa's project/opinion¹⁴, which covered all levels of education since kindergarten (SAVIANI, 2013). Among other aspects, Rui Barbosa recommended the adoption of the intuitive method; mixed-gender classes for children between the ages of 5 and 10; compulsory primary education for boys and girls from 7 to 14; and the permission for girls to miss three days of class per month (MACHADO, 2010). He believed that women were destined for children's education and determined that *kindergartens*, *mixed classrooms*, and *girls' schools* had only *female teachers*. The male classes of *elementary education* (7 to 9 years old) were allowed to hire either male or female teachers.

Debates about the educational issue and its importance for Brazil at that time, which dated from the end of the imperial period, continued under republican ruling. Likewise, the issue of co-education remained controversial. It was disliked by two great powers, the Catholic Church¹⁵ and positivist thinking. The mixed school issue may have related to the concerns of an incipient Brazilian Republic to civilize and order the Brazilian population from a positivist point of view, well synthesized in the national flag motto: "Ordem e Progresso" (Order and Progress).

New times required greater care with public instruction: it was necessary to educate workers according to the bourgeois view as well as modernizing society. The First Constitution of the Republic (1891) classified teaching as secular¹⁶ and charged the State with the

¹²In addition to internal issues, at that time several Western countries advocated for primary instruction and for the importance of making it mandatory. Among many bills put forward in Brazil, Decree n. 7,447, by Leôncio de Carvalho and Rui Barbosa's Opinions stand out. They had a different format and content in contrast to the other bills that had been proposed, since they were more complete and covered all levels of education (MACHADO, 2005).

¹³ The initiative to instruct girls and boys within the same space generated criticism and various reactions in teacher training courses. Schools accepting women in their student body used different tactics in order to tackle the situation, such as a wall in the middle of the classroom to separate boys from girls, rows of desks for each of the sexes, separate classrooms, different timetables and permission for family members to accompany the girls during class. (MOACYR, 1934)

¹⁴ For Rui Barbosa, primary education would consist of three stages: elementary school (7 to 9 years old); junior middle school (9 to 11 years old); and senior middle school (ages 11 to 13), which would last eight years altogether.

¹⁵ The Catholic Church changed its position on mixed-gender schools based on the decisions of the Second Vatican Council (1962 -1965). After this positioning, Catholic schools gradually began to offer classes for students of both sexes.

¹⁶ This did not mean that representatives of the Catholic Church would cease to interfere in educational matters. The idea of having freedom to teach and its tradition in the field of education, in addition to the admission of staff dedicated to the teaching profession were great facilitators within the context of the Old Republic (SAFFIOTI, 2013).

responsibility for primary and secondary education¹⁷. In addition to the Federal District, several states were concerned with the illiteracy rates and with the expansion of primary public education (DA COSTA, 2010). In this scenario, an experience considered to be of great inspiration was the Reforma Educacional Paulista (Paulista Educational Reform) (1893). Along with a project and investment in teacher training, it developed a laboratory for school practices and organization for primary education through school groups¹⁸ (graded primary schools).

Based on the intuitive method (lessons of things), Escola Normal Paulista (Normal School of São Paulo), its Model School (1890) and its Kindergarten (1896) were regarded as centers of pedagogical innovation and became a benchmark for the national public education¹⁹. Reflecting on co-education, this project is considered less ambitious than the one proposed by both the Leôncio de Carvalho Reform (1879) and Rui Barbosa's project/opinions (1882 and 1883)²⁰. In spite of opening doors to primary school for boys and girls, with equal vacancies for both sexes (SOUZA, 1998), only children aged 4 to 6 years (Kindergarten) had access to education in mixed-gender classrooms. The Normal School and the Model School were composed of men-only and women-only sessions²¹.

Although they were based on a common frame, both contents and curricular practices were differentiated according to students' gender. The curriculum of Normal School of São Paulo provided, for example, Military Exercises, Commercial Bookkeeping and Surveying and Political Economy²² for men and Gifts and School Exercises, Home Economics and Gifts for women. Male students were offered experience in the lathes and woodworking workshop, and female students had workshops on modeling and sculptures in clay and plaster. For the boys, *exercises using bars and dumbbells*. For the girls, *activities with rubber bands*.

In school groups during the first republican decades, the instruction of boys and girls was differentiated, even when lesson took place in the same building. Several are the signs of this distinction: classes separated by gender, activities specific to one gender or another, use of part of common spaces in the school at different times, separate entrance gates. Because of budget restrictions, there were mixed-gender classes in school groups of that time. However,

¹⁷The Constitution of 1891 charged the states and municipalities with primary and secondary education. The government became responsible for higher education and for primary and secondary education in Rio de Janeiro, the capital of Brazil then, in collaboration with the Federal District.

¹⁸In the Brazilian territory, school groups were initially created in the State of São Paulo in 1893, which proposed joining isolated schools according to their proximity. School groups were responsible for a new model of school organization in the beginning of the Republic, which met the main characteristics of graded schools, a model used in the late nineteenth century across Europe and the United States to allow for the implementation of popular education.

¹⁹School groups (graded primary schools) were created in 1893 as an experience resulting from the Reform of Primary and Normal Education of the State of São Paulo, promulgated on November 23, 1893. They are linked to the processes which professionalize the primary teaching profession and build teacher identity. The educational experience in São Paulo influenced educational reforms in other Brazilian states. However, Souza (2006, p.117-119) warns that this influence "is marked by ambiguities, involves attraction and repudiation, as well as several appropriations. Os grupos escolares constituíram a modalidade de escola primária predominante no Brasil, em meados do século XX (SOUZA, 2006). This process took place along with efforts to democratize primary education and advancements in urbanization.

²⁰Opinions/projects by Rui Barbosa: *Reforma do Ensino Secundário e Superior* (1882) (Reform of Secondary and Higher Education) e *Reforma do Ensino Primário e várias Instituições Complementares da Instrução Pública* (1883) (Reform of Primary Education and several Complementary Institutions of Public Instruction).

²¹Normal School accepted men and women as a normalist, but the common space was divided according to students' sex. Male students occupied the right wing of the school building and female students, the left wing. Model School was composed of men-only and women-only sessions and contributed to teacher education through the practice of placement and classroom observation of pedagogical practices.

²²The discipline of *Home Economics*, learned by women, provided lessons in purchase and assortment of food, cleaning and organization of the kitchen, care of fabrics (linen, cotton, wool and silk), washing methods and embroidery. Political Economy, a subject only men were taught, had lessons on revenue definition and distribution, salary calculation, origins of conflicts between employer and employees, interest, profits, tax and relations between consumption and production.

some instruments of differentiated instruction were in place in these educational establishments. An example could be classroom desk layout in in order to make integration between male and female students more difficult.

Among many considerations on school groups and their related processes, some aspects in the context of this article should be highlighted. In due course, they may contribute to questions: the spaces of power occupied (or not) by women in these teaching institutions; the presence (or 'invisibility') of female personalities in the school curriculum; the places female and male characters depicted in the course materials occupy, for example, in the lessons of moral rules and of good living or of the precepts of hygiene; the handiwork planned for the instruction of boys and those provided for the instruction of girls. It is also necessary to reflect on who formed the majority of the staff and who held the positions of direction and inspection (ALMEIDA, 2016).

The events and new thoughts in the late nineteenth century and those that marked the beginning of the twentieth century ended up influencing major changes in the social relations and family composition of the urban strata. The ideal of an extended family (parents, children, near relatives and in-laws) was gradually being replaced by the nuclear family (parents and children), due to more value placed on privacy and the identification of family space as the locus of this privacy. Women were dubbed 'home queen' and the household was their kingdom and destiny. Men maintained their status of breadwinners. It was a new arrangement, but it maintained the old hierarchy of power in relation to both sexes. But not all of these families adhered to bourgeois values, either because they did not wish to do so or because they were not able to fully adopt (SCOTT, 2012).

According to republican thinking, the modernization of society and the education of the male labor force were objectives that could be achieved with the help of women, considered "guardians of the home", "moral force of society." In this context, medical and legal authorities defended female education as a means to achieve and maintain the idea of a progressive reality: educated mothers would be agents of good habits in terms of behavior and hygiene.

However, these progressists did not differ from traditionalists on how women belonged to a private world. They only "widened the meaning of the woman's role in the family by emphasizing their power to direct the moral development of their sons and daughters and provide nation with good (male) citizens"(HABNER, 2012, p.57). The idea of motherhood was incorporated to the republican ideal of patriotism, so women were raised to the status of progress encouragers within the walls of her home, in caring for her family and in managing the household. Moralism was still regarded as a vector of "control from the oppressed" (MURARO, 1995, p.64).

Home remained the ideal place for women from all walks of life. However, because of family budget issues, many women could not dedicate themselves to the exclusive care of the household. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, factories were the destination of much of urban female labor force²³. The space of factory work was seen as a threat to honor and family. When in there, female workers were either seen with a look of sympathy or pity due to their lack of choice. They were also considered guilty of provoking the harassment they suffered and had little voice to stand up to how they perceived the reality they lived.

By looking into the panorama of Brazilian education, in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, some thoughts and educational practices were different from the government's ideas and proposals for official instruction. These, in general, have connection with some groups of immigrants or socialist or anarchist workers. Among the immigrant groups in rural areas, being a woman would mean sharing the work. Girls would work in

²³ At the beginning of Brazilian industrialization, the largest portion of factory workers consisted of women and children. At the beginning of the twentieth century, women were gradually replaced by male workers.

agriculture as well as do the household chores. Among workers, especially among anarchists²⁴, women's education was understood as a political need.

This period has also experienced female education aimed at orphans and/or poor girls and young women, through the efforts of religious orders. They had a moralistic, religious, and vocational focus, or they were designed to develop the skills that would allow female students to work in some function considered suitable for women, such as housekeepers, seamstresses, embroiderers and confectioners.

In the Brazilian panorama, the greatest change in the teaching of boys and girls happened in the 1920s, with Escola Nova. The Escolanovista movement, led by Anísio Teixeira, defended official, compulsory, free, secular and mixed-gender education, but did not transcend the conservative world view regarding female education and the places and functions seen to belong to women. Much like at the end of the Empire, the defense of mixed schools, was connected to the economic cost of universal primary education. Formal equality of opportunity was proposed, but with no reflection on gender, ethnic or socioeconomic issues in the educational area.

The ideas of Escola Nova, the nationalization policy of the Vargas Government, and the costs of implementing and maintaining compulsory and free schooling led the Brazilian educational scene to be made up mostly of mixed-gender schools. However, mixed-gender schools did not translate into egalitarian education, they did not change " [...] the traditional representations of the feminine and the masculine " (AUAD, 2006, page 68) and it was not their intention. To illustrate the lack of commitment to the adoption of a system of co-educational instruction including egalitarian education, Scott (2012) recalls an excerpt from Decree-Law 3,200, dated April 19, 1941²⁵, signed by then president Getúlio Vargas:

Men should be educated so that they become fully fit for the responsibilities of head of household. Women will receive education to become *fond* of marriage, *eager* for motherhood, *competent* for raising children, and *capable* of managing the household. [Emphasis added]. (SCOTT, 2012, p. 20)

During the twentieth century, the level of women's education in general has increased for several reasons. The justifications concerned the importance of women's education for the formation of a Nation whose population is more aware of their civic duties; the higher quality of women as mothers because of their education; and public health issues.

The relationship between women's education and public health issues (and others) is not an outdated idea. Discourses and intentions of investments in the area of education still mention this relationship. In the 1990s, multilateral organizations²⁶, women's movements and national governments formed a "triple alliance to reduce poverty and facilitate sustainable development" (ROSEMBERG, 2001: 516). To this end, this tripod was encouraged to invest in projects and actions to girls' and women's education which emphasized the reduction of infant mortality; the improvement of economic productivity

²⁴ Examples of anarchist schools, in the city of Porto Alegre, State of Rio Grande do Sul: *Escola Moderna*, dated from 1914, located in the Navegantes neighborhood, and *Instituto de Educação e Ensino Racionalista* (Institute of Education and Rationalist Teaching), located in the current Ramiro Barcelos street, at that time part of the then African Colony. They were inspired by Francisco Ferrer's thoughts. Among its characteristics were secular teaching and co-education.

²⁵ In the 1940s, most of the Brazilian population lived in the countryside and more than half were illiterate (IBGE, 2010).

²⁶ Fundo das Nações Unidas para a Infância (UNICEF), Organização das Nações Unidas para a Educação, a Ciência e a Cultura (UNESCO), Fundo de Desenvolvimento das Nações Unidas para a Mulher (UNIFEM), Banco Mundial, Organização para Cooperação e Desenvolvimento Econômico (OCDE).

and the reduction of fertility rates as fruits of this investment. By and large, sponsoring projects whose goals and outcomes center on the personal development of female beneficiaries is uncommon. (ROSEMBERG, 2001)

The female presence in higher education was an important consequence of expanding the offer of Basic Education and feminine education as necessary for the *republican progressive and civilizing project*²⁷. In the 1940s and 1950s, the student body of higher education was mostly male (ARAUJO, 2007). During the mid-1960s, in the middle sectors of Brazilian society, girls began to consider attending higher education and even investing in professions that used to be seen as belonging to the masculine world, such as engineering, economics, agronomy and computer science (AREND, 2012).

Research on Brazilian education indicates that during the 1970s the female population represented the majority of students enrolled and graduating in High School. These figures are partly related to teacher formation for the initial grades (*magistério*). Law No. 4,024 of December 20, 1961, LDB - Lei de Diretrizes e Bases (Law of Guidelines and Foundations) - guaranteed equivalence of secondary courses. This measure allowed many normalists, the ones who took *magistério*, to continue their studies in higher education courses via university entrance exams; one of the consequences was that many teachers pursued courses that would allow them to teach in High School.

In the 1990s most of the enrolled and graduating seniors were female, and in the turn of 2000 Graduate School had more women than men in the student body. Research shows that the indicators of growing levels of female education, which were typical until the 1980s, have been declining. In addition, categories such as access to school and school progression are related to factors such as family income. On these investigative results, Rosenberg (2012) concludes:

[...] better school performances among girls, teenage girls and adult women in comparison to boys, teenage boys and adult men virtually disappears in the middle and higher income levels. [...] inequalities in family income, color, ethnicity, region and place of residence and generation affect the education of men and women more intensely in Brazil than gender differences. This makes access and progression in women's education equivalent (but not identical) to that of their male peers (ROSEMBERG, 2012, p. 350-1).

Indicators of greater access to formal education for women do not reflect the same percentage of equal opportunities for women's education in general compared to men. Until the early 2000s, despite the large numbers of female enrollments in higher education, they were concentrated in certain areas of education, such as undergraduate courses, courses of low economic investment and those less valued by our society and the labor market. According to Bourdieu (1999), the relations developed in the school world, even when separated from the influence of the traditional Church, have still reproduced the ideals stemming from a patriarchal relation. As a consequence, there is greater appreciation of some school subjects to the detriment of others.

During the third millennium, Rosenberg (2012) defends the analyses show that the difference between the number of male and female students regarding areas of knowledge, such as those related to the sciences, are decreasing. This is true, as there is a greater

²⁷It is important to remember that, only after 1879 was female enrollment legally allowed in institutions of higher education. The end of legal obstacles did not extinguish the culture that women did not need transcendent education. In addition to social resistance, young women who aspired to this level of education had to face obstacles such as the fact that their education did not focus the preparation for exams to access to higher education.

influx of women into careers previously seen as 'masculine'. However, the same trend is not observed in relation to men and courses stigmatized as female. Given this information, Macedo's (2010) considerations regarding the greater access to higher education by Portuguese women are valid:

But it is clear that such remarkable access to higher education and, albeit more slowly, to dominant positions in the labor market is only viable in a society such as ours, where middle and upper-class women still have other women of lower classes and disadvantaged ethnicities do housework that continues to be done only by women, not by men. [...]. The great paradox, however, lies in the fact that a hierarchy still exists and that there is continued economic exploitation of women, not only by men but also by other women. But however negative that is, it also means that differences are now being defined not so much in terms of sexuality as in terms of social class. Is it better? Is it worse? It is different (MACEDO, 2010, p.59).

Macedo's considerations (2010) refer to the persistence of hegemonic representations about what belongs to men and what belongs to women. According to the author, it is not about a redefinition or division of roles in the *private* world that allows middle and upper class women to experience the public world, but the work of other women in their homes. There is also the question of the *double burden*, a characteristic of women's lives more or less intensely at different social levels.

The above statements refer to the aspect of gender hierarchies conditioned to hierarchies of class and ethnicity. With respect to educational systems, it is imperative to think again and ask: "[...] how do gender hierarchies interact with race and class hierarchies to produce an educational system so exclusive as the Brazilian one?" (ROSEMBERG, 2001, p.518).

In addition, it may be naive to simplify the analysis to a generalization of the differences embedded in the treatment and disputes of power in the relations between men and women, disregarding aspects of economic, social and ethnic origin which characterize educational spaces and the world of labor in addition to concomitant dimensions of the educational system: labor market, training places, consumer market. To this end, Rosenberg (2001) ponders:

Once again, I decided to present an overview of the educational situation of men and women in Brazil because it stresses the confluence of mismatches between the production of academic knowledge, the agenda of feminist movements - especially international ones, included in the Conferences, - multilateral organizations, government and public policies. I also think that such a panorama is a sphinx for universalist feminist theories: does gender domination permeate lines in all social institutions in an equal form? In all stages of life? Does it always mean discrimination against women? (ROSEMBERG, 2001, p. 518)

The higher level of education of the female audience in our society still does not reflect a significant change in the androcentric culture, built over centuries of patriarchal modeling. The experience of schooling in mixed-gender classes does not mean this paradigm has been broken, which makes contemporary what Woolf wrote (2012)²⁸ during the 21st century:

Even when the way is nominally open, i.e. when nothing prevents a woman from becoming a doctor, a lawyer, a civil servant, I suppose there are many hardships and obstacles on the way. I think it is very good and important to discuss and define them, [...]. But it is also necessary to discuss the goals and purposes for which we fight against these tremendous obstacles. Setting these goals should not be taken for granted; they need to be questioned and revisited on a regular basis (WOOLF, 2012, p.19).

How can school space be a locus of activities and contributory reflections for gender equality? The answer to this question is far from simple. Efforts need to be made to intentionally change the status of a mixed-gender school to the quality of a 'co-educational' school. Only then will answers be found.

2. 'Co-education': a concept with a new understanding

Developing and using concepts cannot be disconnected to a political, social, economic and cultural context of an era and neither from space and place. Historicity is embedded in these concepts.

The terms coeducation and mixed-gender school are generally interchangeable, i.e., a school that serves both men and women. Nowadays, however, studying in a mixed-gender school does not mean receiving gender-differentiated instruction. Nor does it mean egalitarian education for boys and girls is sought. Therefore, the meaning of the term '*co-education*' has gained a new meaning, aiming at adopting an education policy for gender equality, which aims at reflecting on social constructions about women's and men's roles, and on how school may have an influence on gender inequality or equality (AUAD, 2003, 2006, ZAIDMAN, 1996).

The *co-educational perspective* perceives "[...] attitudes and values traditionally considered as men's or women's in order to be accepted and assumed by people of both genders" (COSTA & SILVA, 2008, p.11). This understanding shows no intention to deny traces of the masculine or the feminine. Instead, it seeks to understand its social, historical, cultural and anthropological components and to avoid learning these traces as an incontestable phenomenon or derived from an absolute or divine truth. The goal is to elevate schools to a space of coexistence, interaction and learning, where the differences between genders are acknowledged without dogmas or hierarchy of values and without imposing behaviors and naturalized tendencies typical of boys or girls (BENEVIDES, 2006).

A school committed to '*co-education*' takes three key factors into account: **Equal access** does not mean **equal opportunities**, **diversity** and **equity**:

a) equal opportunities, which is not a synonym of equal access; b) diversity, which understands that girls and boys are not equal and values each one's uniqueness promoting existence from acknowledgment of difference; c) equity, which aims to respect the

²⁸ Excerpt from the text *Professions for Women*. Virginia Woolf read this text on Jan. 21, 1931 for the International Women's Empowerment Association. This text was published in *The Death of the Moth* in 1942, after the author's death.

unique characteristics of students [emphasis by the author], believing that rules, methods and content do not meet everyone's needs. (COSTA; SILVA, 2008, p. 11).

Auad (2006) argues whether school might be a place where is separation and of discrimination are learned. On the other hand, schools may also be an institution promoting equality and understanding that differences should not justify inequality. The scholar emphasizes mixed-gender schools, can be both **means** and **presupposition** for the existence of '*co-education*'. She adds:

I advocate for mixed-gender schools with systematic reflection on boys' and girls' coexistence. I also defend the debate about the definition of masculine and feminine in our society. After all, what masculine and feminine do we want inside and outside our schools? (AUAD, 2006, p.55)

2.1 Gender-differentiated schools and the pedagogy of effectiveness

In this study, mixed-gender schooling is shown as a possible means of generating an educational space committed to removing gender inequalities. However, it is necessary to take into account the advocates for gender-differentiated instruction as the most adequate alternative.

Colégio São Bento do Rio Janeiro (Brasil), a traditional school dedicated to the education of boys, sometimes openly denies any intention to accept girls as members of their student body²⁹. Contemporary public speeches by representatives of this institution differ little from speeches given in the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s by defenders of military schools, linked to the Brazilian Army, as schools which offered boys-only education (CARRA, 2008 and 2014)³⁰. Their arguments are similar to those presented by opposers of mixed-gender schools in the late nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth century.

There is nothing new in concerns about the coexistence of both genders in the same classroom, and/or possible advantages or disadvantages listed in the speeches given in the 21st century. The defense of single-gender education as a premise for the achievement of a gender-equal society may bring innovation to the discussion.

Defenders of this idea say that, because boys and girls are different, they need a differentiated pedagogy. Although the same content is taught, the teaching method should be appropriate to the peculiarities of each sex. This model of teaching institution, as well as the rationale that supports it, has advocates in several European countries, Australia, Latin America and the United States. In fact, there are some of them in Brazil³¹.

²⁹ According to information on the website of Colégio São Bento, in Rio de Janeiro, there is no intention to accept girls in elementary, middle or high school.

³⁰ See Carra (2008; 2014) on this subject.

³¹ This contemporary gender-differentiated school model exists in Brazil, although little advertised. Opened in 1994, ColégioCatamarã in São Paulo (SP) follows this design, offering gender-differentiated education from grade 6 of primary school. In Colegio Bosque e Mananciais, in Curitiba (PR), boys and girls study in different classrooms from grade 2 of primary school. These are two recently opened educational institutions, which claim to follow an educational plan based on the model of Fomento de Centros de Enseñanza (Spain). In Rio de Janeiro (RJ), AFEF (Association of Educational and Family Training) has advocated for gender-differentiated education since 2007 This Association provides for Colégio Porto Real - founded in 2012 and located in the same city. In Latin America, there is ALCED - AsociaciónLatinoamericana de Centros de EducaciónDiferenciada (Latin American Association of Centers of Differentiated Education).

Educators who adopt separation according to gender or who teach only one gender are called by their advocates as a "differentiated school". However, the concept of differentiated education goes beyond education designed only for boys or only for girls. In Brazil, an example of differentiated education is indigenous education (GRUPIONI, 2001)³².

This rationale based on pedagogical efficiency and biological differences between men and women claims to ensure a non-sexist school because of separate instruction of men and women, leading to less disparaging competition and comparison between genders during the whole period of basic education.

The advocates of the so-called personalized or gender-differentiated schools consider that differences between boys and girls, such as maturity, behavior, tastes, jokes and ways of learning, are related to innate characteristics. According to Charro:

[...] ignore the intrinsic differences between the sexes [...] This will be addressed as a second generation of differentiated education. I do not mean to separate girls to harm them or to teach them sewing, while boys are taught math. Nor is it the education of the time of General Franco's regime, based on moral and religious beliefs. This differentiated education aims at gender equality. It is not at all religious or linked to religious or moral beliefs [...] It would be ideal if the mixed-gender model disconnected itself from the neutralizing egalitarianism of the genders. However, it is hard to attain that. If you teach in a reasoned, slow and analytical manner, girls get bored, while if you teach in an explicit and agile way the boys get lost. Men's process of maturation and development is much slower than that of girls. Solving this issue is very complicated.³³

There is no doubt that boys and girls, men and women, are equal in rights and duties, humanity and dignity. However, sexual-cerebral dimorphism leads to different forms of socialization, communication, affection, sexuality, behavior as well as different reactions to identical stimuli. These aspects will determine how their learning differs³⁴ (CHARRO, 2009, p. 112).

Many advocates of differentiated instruction in the twenty-first century deny the influence of religion or of the Catholic Church in their arguments. However, in is present

³² The Brazilian Constitution of 1988 granted indigenous peoples the right to differentiated school education. See, among others: GRUPIONI (2001).

³³ Free translation from original: "[...] *Se ignoran las diferencias intrínsecas entre los sexos. [...] Hablemos de ésta como una educación diferenciada de segunda generación. Que quede claro que no defiendo la educación que separa a las niñas para perjudicarlas, para enseñarles costura mientras los niños aprenden matemáticas. Ésta no es tampoco la educación de la época del franquismo, basada en creencias morales y religiosas. Esta educación diferenciada tiene como objetivo la igualdad de la mujer. No es en absoluto religiosa, ni ligada a creencias religiosas o morales [...] Sería ideal que el modelo mixto huyera del igualitarismo neutralizante de los sexos. Pero es muy difícil. Si se enseña de manera razonada, lenta y analítica, las niñas se aburren; mientras que si se enseña de manera explícita y ágil, son los niños que se pierden. El ritmo de maduración y desarrollo en los varones es mucho más lento que el de las niñas. Solucionar eso es muy complicado*". (JORNAL EL PAÍS, 2006, digital text)

³⁴ Free translation from original: "*No cabe Duda de que niños y niñas, hombres y mujeres, son iguales in derechos y deberes, humanidad y dignidad. Sin embargo, el dimorfismo sexual cerebral hace que sean al mismo tiempo diferentes en formas de socialización; comunicación; afectividad; sexualidad; comportamiento; reacciones ante idénticos estímulos; lo que a su vez determina que difieran en su forma de aprender*". (CHARRO, 2009, p. 112).

in the discourses, so that this model of education is perceived to serve the principles defended by conservative religious congregations/organizations.

This discourse dates from this century and is founded on scientific knowledge; in defense of an effective pedagogy; in the quality of formal education; in the search for non-sexist education; and in the right of choice of school education that families wish to offer their sons and daughters. Their arguments, however, do not date exclusively from the 21st century: they are extremely similar to the discourses in the past, such as those in the 1970s and 1980s taking place within Colégio Militar de Porto Alegre and the community in which this school is inserted (CARRA 2008 and 2014)³⁵. This discourse looks contemporary from the outside, but it is actually embedded with old certainties.

Conclusions

It is possible to consider that any discourse that defend education separated by gender, as well as those that defend mixed-gender education shed a light on efforts, movements and functions of gender relations and reflect the changes in the universe of these relations.

I do not disagree that women and men are different. In fact, there are differences between one man and another. There are differences between one woman and another. I believe that many of the functions and/or natural characteristics of men and women permeate culture and, to this end, are also part of the subjective.

I do not understand how separating education by gender can assure non-sexist education. Nor can it encourage female leaderships or equal relations between men and women, regardless of their sexual orientation, political choice, background or religion. We live in a plural world and it is where we will develop our relationships, choices and actions.

The debate about the education of men and women persists, it is open and current. I believe History of Education has much to add to this debate and to the efforts to build a less sexist reality, which also includes the school universe. To this end, I remember the words of Antonio Nóvoa (2004) when he answers the question: What is the purpose of History of Education? "*To explain that there is no change without a history*. Historical work and pedagogical work are very much alike. We have been learning to handle experience and making memories" [emphasis added] (ANTONIO NÓVOA, 2004, p.11). Like Nóvoa (2004, p.10), "I am not talking about chronological history, stuck in the past. I am talking about history that stems from today's problems, which suggests points of view anchored in a thorough study of the past".

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³⁵ Regarding Colégio Militar as a single-sex school and the entry of female workers and students, see Carra (2008 and 2014). Regarding Colégio Militar as a mixed-gender school, see Carra (2014).

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