

# Education, curriculum and masculinity in Spain

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*This chapter analyses the socio-historical evolution of gender education and masculinity in Spain throughout pre and post democracy. We focus on the Physical Education (PE) curriculum and on Physical Education Teacher Education (PETE) due to the significant role that this subject plays in the education of embodied masculinities.*

*According to the ideology of Franco's Regime, the period of dictatorship (1939-1975) was characterized by educational principles inspired in heroic masculinity, and physical practices were means to form dominant bodies serving patriotic and confessional goals. Until mixed education was gradually imposed at the end of Franco's dictatorship and the beginning of democracy there still remained separate models of male and female education. The publication of the educational law issued by the first socialist government (LOGSE, 1990) set coeducational and equality principles in the Spanish educational system for the first time. However, the hegemony of heroic masculinity is still present in PE and PETE culture. On one hand, the predominance of male teachers and PETE students is remarkable and, on the other hand, references to competitiveness, aggressiveness and individualism are comparatively higher in the PETE curriculum and in professional access to PE teachers than in other subjects.*

This study is divided into the following sections:

1. Historical development of boys' education in Spain
2. Gender specific actions under Franco's dictatorship
3. Gender specific actions in Democracy
4. Gender specific aspects in primary teacher training
5. Current trends and issues

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## **1. Historical development of boys' education in Spain**

Gender oriented education is quite recent in Spain. Franco's dictatorship (1939-1975) and its characteristic conservatism, a late urban development – only brought about in the 1960's-,

together with the phenomenon of cultural isolation, delayed the changes in gender roles which were taking place in the rest of Europe.

Among the several socio-cultural aspects related to gender education, those concerning the body are essential as the main framework supporting our gender identity as males or females.

From a sociological perspective, several authors have analyzed the relation between the body and its socio-cultural and historical context (Fallon, 1994; Shilling, 1993; Starobinsky, 1991).

According to Freund & McGuire (1991), the socio-cultural context determines the meaning and importance of the body and body matters. Referring to the concept of social construction of the body, these authors suggest that society and culture have an influence in *shaping* their members.

This would happen to Chinese women's feet, European women's waists in the 19<sup>th</sup> century or whole bodies undergoing surgery in current days. However, the most powerful social influence on our bodies is that which shapes *ideas concerning human bodies*. Such ideas differ from culture to culture.

For instance, what is considered healthy and beautiful in one culture may be considered unhealthy and ugly by another culture. Freund & McGuire, (1991:8) point out that there are many socio-cultural aspects influencing ideas on the body:

„Race, social status, education and gender are among the factors that determine what is understood by *body*. In relation to gender, for instance, in our society we usually think that women are not able or should not carry heavy objects. The expectation that women are weak and the fact that they are treated as such, closes up a circle with the result that women do not develop their strength“.

Although our body is always present in education (and in every minute of our lives), physical education plays a very special role in the social construction of the body and in the construction of ideas related to the body. In this article, we will show how physical education has served to legitimate several concepts on the social roles of men. Physical education has both an explicit and implicit influence in the embodiment of masculinity through educational policies or the ideological dimension of physical practice.

## **2. Gender specific actions under Franco's dictatorship**

The arrival of democracy in 1975 was to end more than three decades of dictatorship and was the main milestone in the recent history of Spain. Therefore, it is essential to differentiate a pre-democracy and post-democracy period.

Education under Franco's regime (1939-1975) was characterized by utter separation of boys from girls in different classrooms and, sometimes, even different schools and institutions with different aims and educational practices.

During the first part of this period (1939-1960), in which the function of the school was both to spread literacy and the regime's ideology, physical education was not considered a subject. Sex segregation was a fact in youth associations in charge of non-formal education under the control of the regime through vertical organisms.

The so called *Sección Femenina (Feminine Section)* encouraged those activities, knowledge and abilities that were considered intrinsically feminine, which were linked basically to children upbringing, home care and men's pleasure, as reflected in this speech by her founder, Pilar Primo de Rivera on 15<sup>th</sup> of January, 1939:

„You must realise that comrades from *Secciones Femeninas* must be educated in our doctrine without distracting them from the essential mission in their women lives. Women's real duty with their country is building families with a base of austerity and happiness in which traditional values are encouraged (...).

Therefore, together with sport and high education, there must be what prepares them to be the real complement to men. We will never have them competing with men, because they will never be their equals and would miss their elegance and grace, which they need for their competence. You will see how these women, educated in the Christian doctrine and the national syndicalism, become useful for the family, the county and the Syndicate“.

This ideology of *Sección Femenina* makes explicit the inferior status of women's role „which will never equal men“. Therefore, women's virtues, which must be developed, would be those facilitating a healthy body for gestation and nursing (reproductive efficiency) and those attracting men, such as elegance, grace and beauty. These beliefs offered a biologic support for the passive role of women (Wolf, 1991). Due to her reproductive role, beauty was related to reproductivity, which was a must for women. Meanwhile men, who fight to get the most beautiful and fertile woman, embody the strength and good physical condition. In short, women's nature is being beautiful *for* men. Gymnastics and dancing were the preferred activities for such a purpose.

The so called *Frente de Juventudes (Youth Front)* would be the male equivalent to *Sección Femenina*. The role of men is characterized by virtues such as sacrifice, loyalty or service to

the nation. Sport and physical education are seen as instruments to teach obedience to authority ideal of Franco's Regime.

General Moscardo, well-known for his role in the battle at Toledo Alcazar and for being president of the Spanish Olympic Committee, and National Delegate of Sports for F:E:T and J.O.N.S., was one of the most outstanding theoreticians of the Regime's ideology. He was utterly aware of the potential of sports addressed to young men. Moscardó (1941: 21) considers it a sign of modern times that governments use physical education as a vehicle or channel to educate young men in the following terms:

„Sport and physical education, due to their extraordinarily educational power, have become a governmental weapon that all people use when they think of their youth education. This is common to people of any kind or race which intend to have their own value and take a role in the world or work for their independence“.

Sport and physical education become privileged practices to construct young men's bodies following essential virtues for the regime Moscardó (1941: 23).

„It is by means of it [sport] that DISCIPLINE is practised and SUBORDINATION, OBEDIENCE to the authority of a referee, COMMITMENT to rules or laws, CHIVALROUS ACCEPTANCE of defeat, WILL FOR VICTORY, NOBLE FIGHT, RESISTANCE to fatigue, TENACITY, COHESION, SPIRIT TO FIGHT, SELF-CONFIDENCE, in a word, all those moral virtues that arise men and make them more apt to fulfil their ends, which are no other than WORK FOR THE NATION APPROACHING GOD“. (Capital letters in original).

In addition to these virtues, physical education has a hygienic role for Moscardó (1941:23), which, for men, is not subordinated to any goal (neither nursing nor aesthetic purposes) but has a moral aim in itself, as it prevents evil and unhealthy temptation.

„Sport, because of its quality and condition has an EDUCATIONAL POWER, A DISCIPLINE VALUE, A HYGIENIC POWER FROM BOTH A MORAL AND MATERIAL POINT OF VIEW, and it would be suicidal to deny it or despise it. By means of sport it is possible that a society that works or studies leads its steps to the sports field, where muscles are developed and so are lungs and the whole body, instead of visiting brothels. Thanks to sport, young people choose to do mountaineering on Sundays with a backpack and a pair of skiing sticks and come back home filled with oxygen and sun after fighting against wind and adverse atmospheric phenomena instead of drinking alcohol or indulging in lust and shame“. (Capital letters in original).

This ideology lasts with Franco's dictatorship. In 1960, the *Spanish Organization for Young People* (*Organización Juvenil Española* or *OJE*) substituted the *Frente de Juventudes* (*Youth Front*). Its structure was a military one and its ideology contained the following eleven maxims which must be taken under oath.

- „Love God and construct thoughts and actions on this love.
- Serve my country and take care of the fraternity of its regions and peoples.
- Make my life a permanent act of service.
- Remember that studying and working constitute my personal contribution to a common enterprise.
- Live in fraternity with my comrades and be sober in the use of my rights and generous in the fulfilment of my duties.
- Defend justice and fight for it although its victory means a higher sacrifice for me.
- To assert freedom for everybody, subordinating mine to the realm of justice and respect to my superiors
- To maintain my condition of the youth and accept my elder's teaching with gratitude.
- To honour with the loyalty of my behaviour the memory of all those who offered their lives for a better Spain.
- To persevere and preserve intact in our memories the above mentioned assertions every morning to feel active in the lap of the *Spanish Organization for Young People* (*Organización Juvenil Española* or *OJE*)“.

This patriotic, military and confessional character of the *Youth Front* and the *Spanish Organization for Young People* is responsible for the main characteristics of male education in the last period of francoism. Nature, and both individual and team sports are the essential educational instruments in the task of creating a male generation of healthy, young people, who can defend their country and increase their productivity. The aim of these practices is to educate men who are able to use their patriarchal power for the defence and development of the nation. Women, however, must be to their service.

### **3. Gender specific actions in Democracy**

During the last stage of francoism there were several movements that claimed for the equality of men and women in different social environments and for the role of education in its achievement. After the 1960's, gradual changes were brought about, such as mixed education of boys and girls together in the same classroom, even though, there were two different models of education for each sex. Girls were taught following the model that gave them the domestic role. Boys, on the other hand, were given the role of country and catholic religion defenders, typical of Franco's regime.

The 1970 General Law of Basic Education (*Ley General de Educación Básica*) made education compulsory until 14. This law established for the first time a common curriculum for boys and girls. However, gender equality was based on a model of assimilation. This means that a model for males is generalized to women. Women must adapt to the predominant male model and abandon the prior female model.

The arrival of democracy (1975) and later the period of transition brought a rupture from preceding ideologies. The first years in the Spanish democracy were characterized by the political and social tension caused by the difficulties to combine the transition from an oligarchic and dictatorial system to a participative democracy. However, the quick social changes affected the traditional roles of men and women, although it took some years to find these changes gradually assimilated in the official educational curriculum.

The 1991 General Organic Law of the Educational System (*Ley Orgánica General del Sistema Educativo* or *LOGSE*) is to be taken as a big step forward in the process. For the first time, an educational law states the need to reconsider education under the light of the principle of equal social opportunities for both sexes. The preface in *LOGSE* states: „The first and fundamental objective of education is to provide boys and girls, both sexes, a whole education that allows them to confirm their own, essential identity...“.

The preliminary section, makes reference to the effective equality in rights of both sexes, the refusal to any kind of discrimination and respect to every culture (Article 2, section c). Moreover, the „Education for Equality“ (*Educación para la igualdad*) is explicitly considered an issue to be taken into account in all different subjects of the curriculum.

Within the trend of breaking the old regime's educational principles, the new educational measures have an egalitarian character, which translates in an education that allows girls to do the same as boys. The curriculum will be transformed to avoid explicit or implicit references that convey women discrimination. As a reaction to francoist segregation, treating girls in a different way from boys, is perceived as discrimination. A radical feminism is oriented to have women in the power roles of men.

This egalitarian spirit inspires a great number of pedagogic movements of innovation with a feminist character. However, in physical education, the impact of this kind of proposals has been relatively minor in comparison with other subjects such as language or literature, probably because there are many more male than female teachers of physical education.

However, some initiatives, such as the criticism of a physical education based on traditionally male sports, alternative proposals, which, in principle, don't give advantage to boys over girls, cooperative or traditional games, which reduce or eliminate competition and aggressiveness, can be interpreted as a reflex of an egalitarian view of physical education. Finally, some groups of pedagogic innovation try to have traditionally female activities, such as dance or body expression, practiced by men.

However, the negation of the differences between men and women would produce, as a paradox, a devaluation of female values and a mechanical transmission of patriarchal views, which identify the emancipation with encroaching of power. In physical education, moreover, the egalitarian plans propose unrealistic physical activities, detached from the socio-cultural trends which inspire and justify the subject. It is hardly ever taken into consideration that the dominant masculinity entails power but also limitations and weaknesses. The masculinizing behaviours and practices mentioned above, include self and other aggressiveness, physical power, hard work and, in sum, an emotional, interiorized tension along the socialization process. Sport plays a very important role in the pervasiveness of these heroic conceptions of masculinity.

Nowadays, the feminist ideology of difference claims shyly that gender issues are treated from equality. This means that boys and girls should be treated as equals in those aspects that they are equal and differently in those aspects in which they are different.

This feminist trend starts from a criticism to the mixed gender school as a universal solution to the problems of gender equality. Moreover, they claim for separate educational spaces in which, boys and girls can live with their equals and develop their differences.

Sport is an example of how sex segregation does not necessarily mean gender discrimination. In most sports there is a male and a female modality and it is not claimed that men and women participate together, as their biological differences would deprive women from the possibility to compete with men with equal opportunities. To sum up, sex segregation in sport creates equal conditions that allow competition among equals.

It is not a question of adopting this competitive model for education in general or physical education in particular, where, participation should be a priority over excellence. A mixed gender model of physical education should be the base on which social conflicts between men and women are reflected and students learn how to solve them from a non-discriminating perspective, which favours respect and equal opportunities for both sexes.

For this reason it is necessary to question the romantic ideal that equal physical education, based on *ad hoc* activities detached from social contexts, give the same opportunities to all the students. Segregation can be a resource for fostering equal participation on the base of any educational process prone to co-education.

#### **4. Gender specific aspects in primary teacher training**

Teaching, especially in lower educational levels, has been considered a traditionally female profession in Spain. Physical education can be taken as it an exception, as is a subject mainly taught by males. This fact underscores the importance of gender questions in the formation of teachers in general and in physical education in particular.

The origin and development of teacher training in Spain runs parallel to the social and historical events above mentioned. During most part of the 20th century, teacher training was carried out in so called *Escuelas Normales*, training centres situated by a primary teaching school. Physical education teachers training, however, was undertaken in a different way. Among the causes of this specific formation, we can mention the low status of the subject and, most important for the present issue, the political orientation given to their teachers.

The first physical education training school, created in 1933, is the first institution to be specifically in charge of physical education training (Casterad & Plana, 1996). Unfortunately, with the Civil War (1936), the training in this centre would stop till several years later. There is a period then, in which teacher training is conditioned by the spirit of the National Movement.

Physical education and teacher training acquires a political tone with the principles of order and authority characteristic of Franco's regime. This is proved by the fact that the National Delegation of the Youth Front would issue monthly the contents and didactic orientations that served as an orientation to physical education (Pastor Pradillo, 1997).

From 1940 the Youth Front was in charge of political, physical and pre-military education of the youth. This was to provoke the separation of physical education teachers from the rest (Vázquez, 1989). More important than the education in the subject, was the deep catholic faith, good manners and patriotism (Beltrán, 1991). In this context, and as a consequence of a process of training leaders for the youth, initiated in the 1938's and 1939's in the so called „national zone“, two training centres emerged in 1941: the National Academy of Leaders and Instructors „José Antonio“ for men, and the School „Isabel la Católica“ for women, both under the auspices of the Youth Front and the Feminine Section respectively (Fernández Nares,



1993). Their study plans (1945 and 1950) reflect the clear ideologic orientation akin to the principles of the Regime.

Physical education, under the denomination „*Educación Física y su Metodología*“, would be taught in the three years of the diploma with a three hour a week schedule, and the obligation to attend a camp of the Youth Front, for male teachers, or the Feminine Section, for females. Sex segregation also reached contents, as only male teachers were provided with lessons in anatomy, physiology, sport techniques and activities in the nature (Romero, 1995).

The General Law of Education (1970) means a definitive change in the conception of Physical education and enhances its importance in Teacher Training. In Teacher Training, the Experimental Plan of 1971, that was in force until 1991, placed the subject „Didactics of Physical education“ as a core module of different specialities. Inspired by technopedagogical theories, the Experimental Plan was characterized by the design of programs to train teachers in techniques and competences to better implement an efficient teaching and obtain optimal learning results. Goals of teaching and learning methods are to be established by experts according to research based on scientific methods. However, as Romero (1995) states, the Experimental Plan of 1971 lacks a scientific background for the definition and pedagogic foundations of physical education. Inconsistent references to fitness and epistemological issues are the foundations of its programs, while references to anatomy, physiology or psychology are not taken into account. Pedagogical considerations are still closer to general moral commitments or lesson management. Social or cultural implications of physical education or sports, such as gender issues, are simply not taken into account. Therefore, the educational changes of the last part of Franco's regime do not challenge traditional conceptions of gender in Teacher Training and physical education. They still remain silent issues.

In spite of its reduced number, during the 1960s and 1970s unfavourable work conditions – half of the income of teachers of other subjects- motivate that some of the specialist in physical education preferred other professional options. The need of teachers of physical education allowed trainers of different sports, mainly male with experience in high performance, to become teachers at schools.

This solution stressed the competitive model of physical education based on sport excellence, physical performance typical of hegemonic conceptions of sports. At that time, teachers of physical education are socially and self perceived as the first filter of the sport talent selection.

## **5. Current trends and issues**

Teacher Training is nowadays regulated by the LOGSE and the Law 1440/1991. According to these regulations, some subjects such as music, foreign languages and physical education are to be taught by teachers who have a specific training in these subjects. The percentage of girls is usually much higher in the different special teaching subjects, except for physical education. This could be considered a sign that very little has changed, and physical education is still the „masculine garden“ of teacher training. However, this is not completely true. Nowadays, physical education teacher training curriculum includes core subjects which were typically considered proper only for women, such as dance or body expression. Besides, critical approaches of gender issues are progressively included by teacher trainers in their current curriculum. Gender implication of sport, health, beauty and fitness industry are considered more and more essential reflections for future teachers in order to understand current implications of physical education.

Beyond law regulations, these inner changes in physical education teacher training are to be empowered in order to facilitate real changes inspired by co-educational purposes. Brown (1999, 2002) and Brown & Rich (2000) focus on how physical education conceptions of students are born and, at the same time, fed on an hegemonic conception of masculinity, characterized by being white, European, mesomorphic, medium class, heterosexual, and physically dominant with a disposition to competitiveness. The hegemony of this male identity places multiple identities of gender in a position of complicity, subordination or marginalization with respect to it. The initial formation can contribute to perpetuate these hegemonic forms of masculinity or change the beliefs on which they are based.

Regarding the practical application of these studies, it is important to note that they can facilitate an explanation of the stories shared by teachers and students. The evidence of teachers' stories which do not match hegemonic identities serves to make such realities visible and, moreover, to make students aware of the problems of certain presuppositions otherwise taken for granted. This is a way to foster a critical awareness of future teachers regarding their self-perception as persons and as teachers.

### **Suggestions for further independent study of the topic**

1. Please find good examples for gender specific working methods in Spanish schools of primary education!

2. Which leisure activities are offered to Spanish children? Try to categorize them and analyse them gender specific way.
3. In the text specific aspect of physical education during the Franco- period were mentioned. Find comparative developments like during the national socialistic and/ or communistic period!

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