

# GENDER PERSPECTIVE IN MEXICAN SCHOOLS

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## POLICY BRIEF PIPE

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### Executive Summary

The Interdisciplinary Program on Educational Policies and Practices (PIPE) organized the seminar entitled "The gender perspective in schools in Mexico" in order to open the debate on this core issue in search of quality and inclusive education.

Based on what was presented and analyzed in the seminar, this document presents considerations on the need to implement an analysis and intervention with a gender perspective in schools. In the seminar discussion, those who presented - and are involved in this issue- affirmed that gender violence is also experienced in the educational sphere and has a great impact on society, so it is essential to take measures in this regard.

This document seeks to raise awareness and reflect on the importance of the topic, indicate its impact, as well as expose some lines of action that were mentioned in the seminar. It is undoubtedly a subject that requires a lot of work, but a first step is to define it, delimit it, generate indicators that consider the risk factors and put it on the educational agenda of Mexico.

### Introduction

If the educational model poses a new vision of education for children and young people facing the 21st century, what do we know about gender equity in schools?

Are the demand for gender and / or sexual orientation considered in the educational model, plans and study programs, as well as in the everyday dynamics of schools? Is there a gender perspective in the new educational model? How much do schools contribute to the reproduction of discourses that associate certain careers, skills or domains with gender?

In order to answer these questions, last November the seminar "The gender perspective in schools in Mexico" was held, from which debate this policy brief emerges.

The speakers at the seminar were Dr. Eusebio Rubio (General Director of the Mexican Association for Health, Lic. Daniela Vázquez (Vice President of Captive Souls), Ms. Ana López (GENDES), Dr. Julieta Morales (Director CENADEH), Dr. Ana Razo (PIPE-CIDE researcher), Ms. Ada Bahena (Coordinator Talentum Media Superior), Ms. Miryam Prado (General Secretary of Still There Hope AC), the dialogue was moderated by Dr. Javier Rojas and M<sup>a</sup> Beatriz Peralta, both of the PIPE-CIDE.

The starting point in which all agreed was that violence and gender discrimination is a global problem, which generates high social costs. Therefore, it is important that the gender perspective has more presence in the new educational model to be able to talk about guaranteeing an education with equity and quality.

## Argument

The Sectorial Program of Public Education 2013-2018, recognizes that it is urgent to reduce gaps in access to education, through an inclusion perspective that eradicates all forms of discrimination due to physical, social, ethnic, gender, beliefs or sexual orientation. In the sense of gender, it determines that schools must produce meaningful learning without gender stereotypes in all students, from entry to completion of their studies.

However, it is important to define as a first step, what gender is and what the implications are in the educational process; as well as its impact in other areas and the relevance it has to guarantee a quality education and the reduction of inequality. For example, in relation to the former, a common mistake is to think of gender as synonymous with women, which is imprecise since gender is a social construction that is built from a sexual difference.

Therefore, when we talk about the gender perspective, we talk about seeing how that construction we have made as a society affects all people, limits or reduces opportunities based on sexual difference. And as Eusebio Rubio pointed out, it is important to let know what the gender perspective is, but also to disprove taboos and define what it is not, since there is a counter discourse that talks about the gender ideology that misinforms.

Within education, gender discrimination can be reflected in stereotypes that affect the access, permanence and terminal efficiency of students in different educational levels, as well as the type of study area that women and men prefer. In turn, gender stereotypes have differentiated effects on the causes of school dropout depending on the gender to which they belong, as pointed out by Myriam Prado and Ada Bahena.

If there is a need of extra income, it is expected that children leave school and join the work environment, leaving their studies truncated. In the case that in the home care tasks are required, either of children or of older adults, it is the women who leave the school to face this task.

On the other hand, studies on violence against children in school have neglected the analysis of the influence of gender, despite the fact that most forms of school violence are deeply rooted in the inequality of gender relations, social norms with a gender bias and discriminatory practices.

The different forms of gender violence at school overlap and reinforce each other. According to UNESCO, bullying and violence based on sexual orientation, real or perceived, are increasingly worrying aspects. Children and adolescents are victims of specific acts of violence as a result of their sexual orientation or gender identity. The consequences of gender violence can be manifested in: absenteeism, low self-esteem, depression or desertion and even lead to suicide.

As Julieta Morales pointed out, it is important to analyze gender violence at schools on two levels: between peers and by the authority. The first level refers to the violence that happens between the students themselves, while the second level refers to that allowed or perpetuated by the teachers and / or managers: either indirectly when by default they maintain this situation of violence that the students live. children, or directly, when they themselves exercise it and engage in discriminatory practices that contribute to naturalizing violence, either through language or other types of actions.

## Recommendations

Faced with a problem with many edges such as gender inequality, the role of education is important. Schools are a crucial space for learning and also for children to understand gender roles. Unleash gender discrimination and the imbalance of power in schools encourages attitudes and practices that undermine school children, defend norms of gender inequality. Unleash gender discrimination and the imbalance of power in schools encourages attitudes and practices that undermine school children, defend norms of gender inequality. Therefore, the education and empowerment of minors are key actions to breaking the cycle of poverty, discrimination and violence.

Therefore, the speakers agreed on the need to make this type of violence and discrimination visible as a starting point. It is necessary to generate indicators, gather information about this situation in order to identify vulnerable groups and risk factors. At the same time, it is important to train and educate the teachers, because as pointed out by Daniela Vázquez, Ana Razo and Miryam Prado, they are key actors who must know how to identify and react and, in addition, teach children to be tolerant and critical.

One aspect that should be considered is the incorporation of strategies focused on changing those norms that are linked to that traditional masculinity. As Ana Lopez said, if we want a society with gender equality we have to address this root problem, that is, unlearn machismo and learn to build empathetic and respectful relationships.

In addition, it is important to articulate a discourse -as mentioned by Eusebio Rubio- to inform the misinformation promoted on gender issues by conservative groups. Likewise, while thinking about educational models, it is essential to reflect on structural issues, since we can have the same number of men and women enrolled, but the point

is how many of them enter the labor market under conditions of equality. Given that the challenge is great, it is necessary to implement complementary strategies that address violence and gender discrimination in the education system from diverse angles.

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## Additional readings

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### Suggested works

Peralta, Beatriz (2017), *La Perspectiva de género en las escuelas de México*, (policy brief), Programa Interdisciplinario sobre Política y Prácticas Educativas (PIPE).