

Article

Coeducation and Citizenship: A Study on Initial Teacher Training in Sexual Equality and Diversity

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Abstract: The present study makes an exhaustive review of the conditions and challenges faced by society to transform the school into a truly inclusive, coeducational, and democratic space. It proposes a theoretical model, of a bottom-up nature, to achieve gender equality in the school environment, giving special importance to teacher training. This study evaluates the training in gender equality and coeducation that students with degrees related to teaching are receiving. An analysis is conducted of the presence of attitudes that support the gender/sex system and the identification of relevant female references in a sample of 452 students in the Degree in Primary Education or the University Master's Degree in Teacher Training for Compulsory Secondary Education, Upper Secondary Education, Vocational Training, and Language Teaching (MUPES). For the collection of information, an ad hoc questionnaire was used that contemplates formative and cultural aspects, together with the Inventory of Ambivalent Sexism (ASI), the Attitudes of Heterosexuals toward Homosexuals (HATH), and the Women in History (WH) scales. Among the main results, the important lack of training in aspects related to gender equality and coeducation, as well as a general lack of knowledge of historical female references, stands out. It can be concluded that, at present, teacher training is still in the early stages of the proposed model.

Keywords: coeducation; citizenship; teacher training; gender; attitudes; historical references



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1. Introduction

There are many educational and social challenges facing the school of the 21st century. Among them is the important challenge of generalizing and consolidating education for citizenship and coeducation as fundamental strategies for promoting social sustainability. This kind of training is crucial in a modern and democratic society committed, in general, to the Sustainable Development Goals promoted by the United Nations (UN), and in particular to Goal 5: Gender Equality. In this sense, Cardona et al. [1] recall that countries that are precursors of equality of rights and opportunities, such as Sweden or Norway, consider citizen training in this area to be a state's obligation. The school, due to its great potential for transformation, is a decisive environment for this task [2,3]. It is a fundamental space for socialization and learning, which allows both the exercise of democratic and egalitarian values (participation, dialogue, equality, equity, etc.) and the development of citizen awareness and critical thinking. Education policies aimed at meeting this challenge are therefore essential [1,4]. Spanish educational legislation makes express mention of these issues. For example, the preamble to Organic Law 2/2006, of 3 May, on Education (LOE), modified by Organic Law 8/2013, of 9 December, on the Improvement of Educational Quality (LOMCE) [5,6], reflects the importance of aspects such as equality between men and women in the comprehensive training of students, the recognition of sexual diversity, overcoming sexist behavior, preventing gender violence, respecting fundamental rights

and freedoms, or developing critical thinking in the face of inequalities. Despite this, androcentric and/or heteronormative values and behaviors are still present in educational practice [7–9], highlighting the difficulty and remoteness of this challenge.

The creation of a new school model is based on the recognition that the school institution is not a neutral space [3,10]. Hegemonic identities, traditionally built on androcentric bases, continue to be promoted and shaped [11–13]. Therefore, in order to reduce this patriarchal reproduction, overcome a different form of sexism, and promote new frameworks of representation and citizen awareness, an intentional exercise of transformation of the school must be made [3,14–16]. It is therefore a matter of adopting concrete measures and actions that will allow the traditional model of mixed school to be transcended [13]. From this perspective, the hopeful trinomial—coeducation, inclusion, and citizenship—is configured as a very solid response to this challenge.

Traditionally, coeducation, as an alternative to the mixed school, emanated from the feminist movement, being indispensable in the fight for equality both the inclusion of the gender perspective in school and the rethinking of the cultural transmission that takes place in teaching environments. This conceptualization can be seen in the following definition offered by the Guide to Coeducation of the Women's Institute [17] (p.17): "Coeducation is understood as the current pedagogical proposal to respond to the demand for equality made by feminist theory, which proposes a reformulation of the model of knowledge and idea transmission from a gender perspective in the spaces of socialization for training and learning". Gradually, a positive perspective on the construction of female or male identity, and even new identities from queer approaches, has been integrated into the framework of this educational model [18], broadening its scope and incorporating new nuances linked to diversity. Currently, the theory of coeducation is linked to education for citizenship, educational inclusion and critical pedagogy [1,3,4]. In the words of Vergara [19] (p. 197), "the fundamental task of coeducation is the permanent and progressive construction of a democratic order, that is, the scenario where problems are elaborated through reflective activity and negotiation...". To this end, it is necessary to consider the multiplicity of perspectives, democracy, diversity, globalization, identity, or otherness [20]. In short, coeducation questions the differentiated processes of socialization of boys and girls, or analyses the set of beliefs and stereotypes which support the differences between the sexes, and generates an alternative context of participation and dialogue, where everyone has a place, making it possible to configure plural and diverse identities.

These changes in the conceptualization of coeducation have been supported by the development of feminist theory, inviting the school to assume these advances and to ascend intentionally the "levels of equality" (Figure 1), a theoretical model developed and proposed by the authors to clarify this process. The first of these levels focuses on knowing and identifying the bases of the so-called sex/gender system. This term was proposed by Rubin [21] (p. 44), who defined it as "a set of agreements by which society transforms biological sexuality into products of human activity and in which these transformed sexual needs are satisfied". The capacities, qualities and roles assigned to each gender are antagonistic, enjoying different consideration and social status. This system, therefore, is based on supposed differences and sustained by the opposition generated by these differences (masculinity vs. femininity, public vs. private, or domination vs. submission). In this way, asymmetrical and hierarchical relationships are promoted that legitimize the subordination of the feminine [22–24]. From the school, it is necessary to be aware of this circumstance. For this, it is necessary to make visible the hierarchical relations of power derived from the sex/gender system and to provide tools that allow identifying them. Even more so taking into account that among the population in general and, in particular, teachers, there are some difficulties in perceiving inequality and discriminatory practices [9,25,26]. As a result, teacher training in this area is essential in order to move beyond the first level toward equality and coeducation (Figure 1).

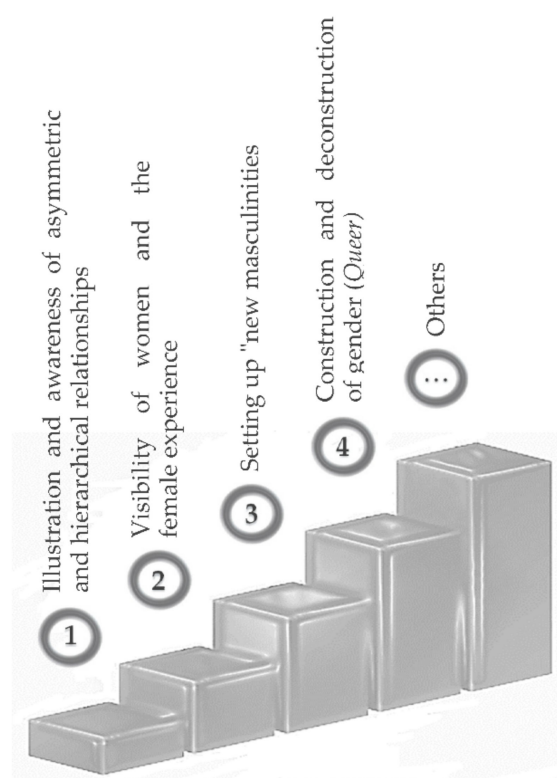


Figure 1. Ladder for equality and coeducation. Source: drawn up by the authors.

The configuration of personal identity is a symbolic and unfinished process that is nourished by the constant dialogue between society and the individual [22,27]. Therefore, the experiences, discourses, and realities that society offers to men and women will inexorably condition the construction of their identity in feminine and masculine [28,29]. The feminist movement, therefore, has fought the “natural destinies” of women and has also questioned the configuration of their historical and social identities [30], demanding a rethinking of these. From a coeducational approach, plural experiences and narratives should be promoted that allow reference frameworks far from clichés, prejudices, and hegemonic identities [16]. However, a fundamentally androcentric culture and science continues to be reproduced in the school [13,31]. In this sense, various studies have noted both the invisibility of the female experience in the curriculum, as well as the absence of gender relations in the teaching of social and historical phenomena [11,32–34]. This intentional absence has also favored the concealment of gender diversities and, consequently, the maintenance of identities built on androcentric bases [12]. For all these reasons, making women visible publicly, historically, and culturally, and highlighting the qualities associated with female identity, is the second level toward equality and coeducation (Figure 1).

The conquest of equality is not possible without a rethinking of the roles, qualities, expectations, and values assigned to men. It is necessary to follow a two-way path where men, too, learn and internalize what is traditionally feminine. For this reason, many recent gender studies speak of the “new masculinities,” placing men within the sex/gender system, questioning the traits associated with archetypal identity, and approaching masculinity from a plural perspective [30]. The third level in the escalation of equality focuses on the construction of nonhegemonic male identities (Figure 1). The school must avoid traditional models of male socialization since from these approaches, masculinity is linked to the demonstration of strength and aggressiveness [35]. It is therefore a matter of teaching boys and girls that being a man can be associated with qualities such as empathy, sensitivity, or dialogue. To do this, as in the previous step, alternative references must be presented, in this case, egalitarian male models that show real men to be inspired [36]. In short,

questioning traditional masculinity and promoting the configuration of new masculinities is, as already indicated, the third level in overcoming the inequalities described.

The fourth level proposed for achieving equality is linked to queer theories (Figure 1). De Lauretis [37], a pioneer in this approach, considers that gender is a semiotic construction. This allows it to be transformed, but also deformed or even performed. This author proposed the gestation of a theory that would mix social criticism with conceptual and intellectual work for the creation of an alternative discourse. Originally, queer approaches called for the inclusion of sexual diversities and the reconfiguration of identities in gender studies. Making diversity visible and proposing positive frames of reference became fundamental objectives for the formation of new meanings around LGBTBIQ+. This can be appreciated in the following words of De Lauretis [37] (p. 109): “I hoped that, together, we would break the silences that had been built in “lesbian and gay studies” around sexuality and its interrelationship with sex and race...”. Today, queer theories question the binary nature of the sex/gender system and the supposed sexual and gender stability [38]. Therefore, Cardona et al. [1] propose to consider the dimensions of identity as a question of diversity and its expression as a spectrum. In any case, a less restrictive and hierarchical reconsideration of sexual and gender categories becomes necessary [18]. However, these approaches are still far away, possibly because much of society is still moving beyond the first “levels of equality” described (Figure 1).

In the school environment, the queer perspective is rooted in the current principles of educational inclusion and critical pedagogies and liberation of the oppressed [1,3,4,10,18,39]. Inclusion, as indicated by United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) [40], is based on human rights and must therefore guarantee access and participation for all, regardless of their ethnicity, gender, orientation, or way of learning. This is not limited, therefore, to filling classrooms with diverse subjects (access), but also requires giving them a voice (participation). To this end, it is essential to combat their invisibility, promoting frames of reference that reach all identities. It is a question of promoting, as Vidiella [16] (p. 95) indicates, “other zones of identification and experimentation that deconstruct the hegemonic forms ‘de hacer’ of collaborative and cultural work, or from the ways in which we think and represent ourselves with respect to the categories of subjectivation”. On the other hand, so-called queer pedagogy, such as feminist pedagogies, is strongly linked to the theoretical approaches of critical pedagogies. From a committed and intentional position, this pedagogy intends to question and transform the rigidity of the sex/gender system [41], denouncing the heteronormativity of today’s society, showing the mechanisms that it uses to maintain the status quo, and developing a critical, deep and inclusive view. In the words of Nemi [39] (p. 591), “a queer lens for pedagogical practice would mean observing the varied possibilities of expression of sexuality without the necessity of labels or fixed identities”. Education understood in this way assumes the postulates of Freire [10] since it considers that the educational fact can or should be at the service of the transformation of the world. In short, it is about generating the necessary conditions to constitute an alternative model of person and society from a critical analysis of the context [42].

Teacher training is of great importance in all these matters, and therefore, the implementation of the gender perspective, queer theories, and citizenship education in university studies linked to the teaching profession is unavoidable (a specific, intentional, and transversal training) [2,7,43,44]. The current moment is, as Aguayo et al. [45] (p. 15) indicate, “the ideal moment to stimulate a training of a transversal nature paying special attention to the gender perspective...”. This implies that university professors have the responsibility to know and use these pedagogies in their classrooms, in order to promote innovative ways of redesigning education [18]. It also requires that curricula include skills and content linked to coeducation and equal opportunities [7]. However, recent studies in Spain reveal the scarce presence of the gender perspective in university teaching guides [46,47] or at the End of Degree Projects [45,48,49]. In addition, other research [9,50,51] warns that there

is a certain inability to detect inequality and discrimination practices among teachers, a “gender blindness” that hinders the transformation of the educational task.

It is not enough, therefore, to demand alternative pedagogical models to overcome the coeducational challenge. We must ensure that these pedagogies are put into practice. At this point, we should ask ourselves whether future teachers are prepared to undertake this task or whether teacher training is adequate or sufficient [52]. Therefore, it is a priority to investigate aspects such as the content of curricula, attitudes, stereotypes, teaching practices, feminist epistemology, or the presence of plural references. The aim is to determine the level or levels of the so-called equality levels, both for trainee teachers and for the institutions in which they are taught.

In addition to other studies [52–55], attitudes are considered to play a relevant role in the stagnation or rise of the levels of equality described, and their evaluation in teachers is therefore fundamental. These attitudes include, for example, sexism, transphobia, heterosexism, and homophobia. In this case, the work focuses on the sexist attitudes and attitudes toward homosexuality of future teachers. Subirats [56] (p. 61), a reference in matters of equality and coeducation, defines sexism as “those attitudes that introduce inequality and hierarchical treatment of individuals, based on the differentiation of sex”. At present, one can distinguish both attitudes marked by discrimination and opposition to women, and attitudes tinged with paternalistic and indulgent feelings toward them. In both cases, undervaluation and prejudice based on sex are being legitimized. This double form of sexism was named by Glick and Fiske [57] as ambivalent sexism. There are two differentiated but closely related components: hostile sexism (HS) and benevolent sexism (BS) [25,56]. The former responds to a more traditional form of sexism and is characterized by prejudice based on the inferiority and dangerousness of women. The second, of a more subtle nature, although it uses a positive affective tone, attributes to women’s stereotyped qualities and roles such as vulnerability or caring for others. In any case, both modalities of sexism perpetuate and legitimize the inequality and subordination of women. Strongly linked to sexism is heterosexism, since it involves differential treatment and rejection of homosexuals [30,55]. Underlying this type of attitude is the belief that heterosexuality is more desirable than any other sexual orientation, considering homosexuality to be incomplete, pathological, or immoral [58]. All of these forms of prejudice sustain and underpin the sex/gender system, and hence, they can be placed on the first level described. Overcoming them places individuals, in particular, and society, in general, in a position to move up the ladder to equality.

Finally, it is necessary to assess the extent to which the training carries out an exercise of valuation of gender forms considered subaltern. One of the main strategies is, as has already been indicated, the integration of voices that have shaped and continue to shape social knowledge into the curriculum [8,11]. The aim is to make women visible publicly and culturally and to teach from the Faculties of Education historical female references [11,13,59]. Consequently, this work deals with the study of sexist and heterosexist attitudes of future teachers and the diagnosis of training deficiencies through the evaluation of the knowledge of deconstructive social and historical female references. In this way, the state of overcoming the second level of proposed equality is explored. Therefore, this study aims to answer the following research questions: Does teacher training favor overcoming the first step of equality? Are there differences in the maintenance of sexist and negative attitudes toward homosexuality depending on the type of teaching studies? Do training in gender equality and training in coeducation have an impact on this type of attitude? Does the training of future teachers contribute to overcoming the second step of equality? Are there differences in the knowledge of female references depending on the type of teacher training? Does it affect the knowledge of relevant women in history to have received training in gender equality and coeducation? At what level, therefore, can future teachers be placed?

2. Materials and Methods

2.1. Sample

In the present research, a nonprobabilistic sampling was carried out for convenience [60] in three public universities in Spain: University of Burgos (UBU), University of Murcia (UM), and University of Valladolid (UVa). The definitive sample is comprised of 452 students with degrees related to the teaching function, specifically the Degree in Primary Education (45.80%) and University Master's Degree in Teacher Training for Compulsory Secondary Education, Upper Secondary Education, Vocational Training, and Language Teaching (MUPES) (53.98%).

Study participants are between the ages of 19 and 58 years old, with a mean age of 24.74 (SD = 6.51). In terms of gender distribution, 66.59% are female, 32.96% are male, and the remaining 0.44% are intersex. With respect to sexual orientation, 89.06% declare themselves heterosexual, 4.91% define themselves as homosexual, 4.24% consider themselves bisexual, and the remaining 1.79% are asexual. Finally, in relation to the universities where they are studying, nearly half of the participants in the research come from the UVa (45.58%), followed by 30.53% of UBU students, and 23.89% of UM students.

2.2. Instrument

The information was collected using a questionnaire built ad hoc from three sections. The first section is made up of questions on sociodemographic, cultural, and educational aspects. The second section is related to the first level for equality, including two standardized scales on attitudes related to the sustainability of the sex/gender system. The third and last section is a scale on female references (historical, scientific, and cultural), thus linking with the second level for equality. The instrument used is described in detail below:

First section:

Sociodemographic, cultural, and educational aspects, including sex, age, sexual orientation, adherence to religious beliefs, current university studies, and training received on gender equality and coeducation.

Second section:

Inventory of Ambivalent Sexism (ASI) scale by Glick and Fiske [57] validated in Spanish by Expósito et al. [25]. This is a Likert-type scale of six response options, consisting of 22 items formulated in the same direction. It evaluates the level of ambivalent sexism of the participants, differentiating its main components: Hostile Sexism (HS) and Benevolent Sexism (BS). In this research, the ASI shows excellent reliability, with a Cronbach's alpha of 0.934 and a McDonald's Omega of 0.945, as do the two subscales of HS ($\alpha = 0.934$; $\Omega = 0.946$) and BS ($\alpha = 0.849$; $\Omega = 0.890$).

The Heterosexual Attitudes toward Homosexuality (HATH) scale by Larsen et al. [61] is translated into Spanish and validated by Barrientos and Cárdenas [62] in a sample of Chilean university students. It is a five-point Likert scale, which has 20 items and evaluates the presence of negative attitudes toward homosexuals. A high score on the scale indicates greater prejudice toward this social group. In the present study, the reliability presented by HATH is excellent ($\alpha = 0.891$, $\Omega = 0.928$).

Third section:

The Women in History (WH) scale corresponds to the literal translation into Spanish of the second part of Crocco's knowledge survey [63]. WH was previously validated in the Spanish version by Ortega-Sánchez and Heras-Sevilla [59]. The WH in this study shows excellent reliability ($\alpha = 0.813$; $\Omega = 0.861$).

2.3. Procedure

The present study responds to a nonexperimental quantitative design of a transversal nature, with the aim of exploring and analyzing a set of variables at a given time [60]. For these purposes, the instrument described in the previous section was used in the information collection process. The administration of the questionnaire was carried out in person and collectively in the different classrooms selected, remembering the anonymous and

voluntary nature of the completion of the questionnaire and therefore of the participation in the research.

The questionnaires were then computerized and coded in a database. For this task, together with the analysis, the statistical package IBM SPSS Statistics 25 was used. For the study of the size of the effect of the results extracted, the free software G*Power in its version 3.1.9.4 was used, in accordance with the recommendations for its use from Cárdenas and Arancibia [64].

2.4. Data Analysis

In the initial exploration, descriptive statistics were used, mainly the study of frequencies and percentages. This procedure provides statistics and graphical representations that are useful for describing many types of variables. However, the objectives of this research make it necessary to use other types of statistics that allow us to compare groups and clarify the possible relationships between variables. For this purpose, an independent-samples t-test was considered. Parametric statistics were chosen due to both their firmness [65] and the size of the sample. In this regard, in accordance with the central limit theorem, Barreira [66], (p. 171) states “... increasing the sample size reduces the effects of non-normality of the variables, which increases the robustness of the analysis and makes the transformation of these variables less necessary”. This is further reinforced by the study of the statistical power of the results. For this purpose, the measure of effect size (d) proposed by Cohen was used [67].

3. Results

3.1. Global Aspects: Training, Attitudes, and Knowledge of Future Teachers

As already indicated in the description of the sample, the participants in the research are future teachers, specifically, students of the Degree in Primary Education or of the MUPES in three Spanish universities (UBU, UVa, and UM); 45.80% are enrolled in the Degree in Primary Education, and 53.98% study the MUPES. With respect to the distribution of these studies in the different universities (Table 1), it is observed that more than half (52.17%) of the students in the Degree in Primary Education belong to the UM, with a lower proportion of students in the UVa (26.57%) and the UBU (21.26%). In relation to the persons enrolled in the MUPES, it is noteworthy that none come from the UM. In this case, the majority (61.48%) are students from the UVa, with a lower representation of students from the UBU (38.52%).

Table 1. Teacher training and training in gender equality and coeducation.

	Frequency	Valid Percentage *
Teacher training (<i>n</i> = 451)		
Degree in Primary Education	207	45.80
UBU	44	21.26
UM	108	52.17
UVa	55	26.57
MUPES	244	53.98
UBU	94	38.58
UM	-	-
UVa	150	61.48
Gender equality (<i>n</i> = 451)		
With training	255	56.54
No training	196	43.46
Coeducation and classroom approach (<i>n</i> = 450)		
With training	165	36.67
No training	285	63.33

* Percentage within specific teacher training.

The descriptive analysis of the training received on issues related to gender equality shows that this type of teaching is not widespread. Just over half of the respondents (56.54%) have received training related to these issues at some point (Table 1). Furthermore, the duration or extension of this training varies from less than 1 h to more than 180 h, and this great dispersion can be seen in the measures of central tendency ($M = 22.01$, $SD = 27.65$; $M_e = 10.00$; $M_o = 60.00$). On the other hand, in the pedagogical training (coeducation and approach to gender equality in the classroom), a greater lack of training is discovered. Only 36.67% of the students have received this type of training, that is, more than 60% lack specific training to deal with equality and coeducation in the classroom (Table 1). With respect to the duration of this pedagogical training, a great variability is again discovered with interventions that oscillate between 1 h and 400 h. Again, the central tendency measures reflect this dispersion. ($M = 31.31$, $SD = 27.65$; $M_e = 14.50$; $M_o = 60.00$).

With the purpose of exploring aspects of the first level of the steps for equality, the degree of sustainability of attitudes linked to the sex/gender system was evaluated. The scores obtained on the different measures of sexism reveal that the participants in the study have very low levels of adherence to all of them: ambivalent sexism ($M = 0.85$, $SD = 0.81$), hostile sexism ($M = 0.93$, $SD = 1.01$), and benevolent sexism ($M = 0.77$, $SD = 0.77$). In line with these findings, the scores obtained in the HATH show a positive attitude of the sample toward homosexuals ($M = 1.30$, $SD = 0.40$), since, as in the previous scales, the scores can range from 0 to 5. In both cases, very low levels of sexism and prejudice toward sexual diversity are found, showing clear elements of overcoming the first level for equality and coeducation.

In relation to the knowledge of female references, a crucial aspect at the second level for equality, the results obtained in the WH scale ($M = 3.89$, $SD = 3.04$) show a generalized lack of knowledge, since the scores can oscillate between 0 and 15.

3.2. Incidence of Training for the Exercise of the Teaching Profession

In order to determine the success of teacher training (Degree in Primary Education or MUPES) in overcoming the levels or grades for equality, a comparison was made of the scores obtained by both groups on the different scales: BS, HS, ASI, HATH, and WH (Table 2). The analysis carried out in the ASI and its two subscales (BS and HS) reveals statistically significant differences ($p = 0.017$) in the HS. In this case, students in Degree in Primary Education obtain a higher score in HS ($M = 1.05$, $SD = 1.05$) than their peers in the MUPES ($M = 0.82$, $SD = 0.96$). However, the study of effect size reveals a low power of the results ($d = 0.23$); therefore, it cannot be considered that the students of the Degree in Primary Education hold higher levels of traditional sexism.

Table 2. Comparison of ASI (BS and HS), HATH, and WH scores according to their educational background.

	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>gl</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>d</i>
First level for equality						
BS—Benevolent Sexism						
Degree in Primary Education (<i>n</i> = 207)	0.79	0.75	0.55	449.00	0.580	0.05
MUPES (<i>n</i> = 244)	0.75	0.78				
HS—Hostile Sexism						
Degree in Primary Education (<i>n</i> = 207)	1.05	1.05	2.40	449.00	0.017 *	0.23
MUPES (<i>n</i> = 244)	0.82	0.96				
ASI—Ambivalent Sexism						
Degree in Primary Education (<i>n</i> = 207)	0.92	0.84	1.74	449.00	0.082	0.17
MUPES (<i>n</i> = 244)	0.79	0.79				
HATH—Attitudes toward homosexuality						
Degree in Primary Education (<i>n</i> = 207)	1.31	0.34	0.31	449.00	0.759	0.02
MUPES (<i>n</i> = 244)	1.30	0.45				
Second level for equality						
WH—Women in History						
Degree in Primary Education (<i>n</i> = 207)	2.50	1.85	−10.28	393.20	0.000 **	−0.93
MUPES (<i>n</i> = 244)	5.04	3.30				

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$.

Comparison of HATH scores between those studying for the Degree Primary Education ($M = 1.31$, $SD = 0.34$) and those studying for the MUPES ($M = 1.30$, $SD = 0.45$) shows no difference in sustaining negative attitudes toward homosexuality between the two groups ($p = 0.759$).

In relation to the second level for equality, the scores obtained in the WH by the students of the Degree in Primary Education ($M = 2.50$, $SD = 1.85$) and by the students of the MUPES ($M = 5.04$, $SD = 3.30$) were compared. In this case, statistically significant differences are found between both groups ($p = 0.000$), obtaining the students of the MUPES better results on the scale. In addition, a high effect size is found ($d = -0.93$), which reinforces the power and stability of these results. Therefore, it can be stated that MUPES students have a greater knowledge of relevant women in history. These findings invite us to reflect on the initial training of teachers since they are the future teachers of primary education who are most ignorant of female references, an aspect that is indispensable for working with other models of women in schools.

3.3. Incidence of Gender Equality Training

In order to evaluate the impact that the training has had on gender equality, the scores obtained on the different scales (BS, HS, ASI, HATH, and WH) by those students who had received the training were compared with the results obtained by those who had not (Table 3). The comparative analysis on the scores on the measures of sexism finds no significant differences ($p < 0.05$) between the two groups on any of the measures (BS, HS, and ASI). In turn, the comparison of HATH scores between those who have had training in gender equality ($M = 1.31$, $SD = 0.41$) and those who have not ($M = 1.29$, $SD = 0.39$), does not find differences in the sustaining of negative attitudes toward homosexuality between the two groups either ($p = 0.718$). It may be considered that the attitudes toward equality of the future teachers are not related to the training received in the gender perspective.

Table 3. Comparison of ASI (BS and HS), HATH, and WH scores based on gender equality training.

	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>gl</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>d</i>
First level for equality						
BS—Benevolent Sexism						
With training (<i>n</i> = 255)	0.81	0.78	1.17	449.00	0.243	0.03
No training (<i>n</i> = 196)	0.72	0.75				
HS—Hostile Sexism						
With training (<i>n</i> = 255)	0.93	1.00	0.14	449.00	0.887	0.01
No training (<i>n</i> = 196)	0.92	1.02				
ASI—Ambivalent Sexism						
With training (<i>n</i> = 255)	0.87	0.84	0.64	449.00	0.524	0.02
No training (<i>n</i> = 196)	0.82	0.79				
HATH—Attitudes toward homosexuality						
With training (<i>n</i> = 255)	1.31	0.41	0.36	449.00	0.718	0.05
No training (<i>n</i> = 196)	1.29	0.39				
Second level for equality						
WH—Women in History						
With training (<i>n</i> = 255)	3.77	3.22	−1.04	449.00	0.301	−0.10
No training (<i>n</i> = 196)	4.07	2.78				

A comparative analysis was also conducted of the scores obtained in the WH by students trained in gender issues ($M = 3.77$, $SD = 3.22$) and by students without such training ($M = 4.07$, $SD = 2.78$). In this case, those without training show a greater knowledge of female references, although no statistically significant differences are found between the two groups ($p = 0.301$). It can therefore be stated that the training received on gender equality has no impact on the identification of relevant women in History.

3.4. Incidence of Training on Coeducation and Gender Perspective in the Classroom

In this case, too, the scores obtained on the different scales (BS, HS, ASI, HATH, and WH) by those students who have received specific training on coeducation and gender perspective in the classroom, and by those who have not participated in this type of teaching were compared (Table 4). The analysis carried out in the first level scales for equality does not show significant differences in any of them ($p < 0.05$). Similar levels of hostile, benevolent, and ambivalent sexism are found in both groups. The same happens with the maintenance of negative attitudes toward homosexuality, being very similar in both groups. Again, it can be stated that attitudes toward equality of the future teachers studied are not related to the training received in coeducation and gender perspective in the classroom.

Table 4. Comparison of ASI (BS and HS), HATH, and WH scores based on training in coeducation and gender mainstreaming in the classroom.

	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>gl</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>d</i>
First level for equality						
BS—Benevolent Sexism						
With training (<i>n</i> = 165)	0.84	0.81	1.36	315.61	0.175	0.14
No training (<i>n</i> = 285)	0.73	0.74				
HS—Hostile Sexism						
With training (<i>n</i> = 165)	0.98	1.04	0.90	448	0.369	0.09
No training (<i>n</i> = 285)	0.89	0.99				
ASI—Ambivalent Sexism						
With training (<i>n</i> = 165)	0.91	0.87	1.18	311.97	0.241	0.12
No training (<i>n</i> = 285)	0.81	0.78				
HATH—Attitudes toward homosexuality						
With training (<i>n</i> = 165)	1.33	0.43	1.17	448	0.243	0.11
No training (<i>n</i> = 285)	1.28	0.38				
Second level for equality						
WH—Women in History -						
With training (<i>n</i> = 165)	3.04	2.85	−4.80	361.18	0.000 **	−0.46
No training (<i>n</i> = 285)	4.41	3.04				

** $p < 0.01$.

In relation to the second level for equality, statistically significant differences are found ($p = 0.000$) between the scores obtained in the WH by students who participated in training on coeducation and addressing the gender perspective in the classroom ($M = 3.04$, $SD = 2.85$) and by those students who have not received such training ($M = 4.41$, $SD = 3.04$), with the latter's score being higher. Contrary to expectations, the group that lacks training in coeducation shows a greater knowledge of female references (historical, scientific, and cultural). Despite the discovery of highly significant differences between both groups ($p = 0.000$), the study of the power of the results reveals a moderate effect size ($d = -0.46$). These findings invite us to reflect on the quality and depth of pedagogical training in gender since those who claim to be trained in this area are more ignorant of female references, an aspect that should be considered in such training.

4. Discussion

The approach to gender equality and coeducation, widely understood, are essential aspects of teacher training. Both in the Spanish and international context, sensitivity toward equality and attention to sexual and gender diversities has increased, materializing in policies and concrete actions. Among the international recommendations, the Sustainable Development Goals (UN), which establish gender equality as a specific objective (Goal 5), stand out. Likewise, specific actions related to teacher training in sex education, gender mainstreaming, equality, and coeducation are also noteworthy. UNESCO [68], for example, insists on the importance of providing scientific and quality training on these issues to educators, teachers, and specialists linked to the training of individuals. Likewise,

different international conferences on women emphasize the importance of including the gender perspective in the different stages of education, making express mention of the training of trainers [27]. In this sense, various authors are critical and/or vigilant with the curricula, contents, and competencies developed in university degrees linked to pedagogy and education since they do not seem to address gender equality, sexual diversity, and coeducation in sufficient depth [7,52–54]. It is worth reflecting on this since the students of the Faculties of Education of today will be the teachers of tomorrow, that is, those in charge of promoting positive acceptance of personal identity and sexual orientation of themselves and others, detached from gender-discriminatory elements [69]. The idea is to implement a profoundly holistic and sociocritical educational model on human sexuality at the university, which includes the gender perspective [69,70], making it possible to overcome “gender blindness” [9,50,51] and assuming the commitment of the pedagogy and teaching profession to equality [14]. In the words of Aristizabal et al. [15] (p.64), “The key and the challenge continues to be to offer new teachers sufficient training in a comprehensive manner so that they understand that the challenge of equality is a social necessity that does not allow for further postponement in the field of education”.

All of the above highlights the need for and relevance of training on gender equality and coeducation. According to the results obtained in this study, one out of every two students of the Degree in Primary Education and of the MUPES has received some type of training related to gender equality. This value decreases considerably when we asked about specific training in coeducation and addressing these issues in the classroom. Only 36.67% declare to have received pedagogical and educational content on gender equality, evidencing a significant lack of training, supported by previous research. The study carried out in the Community of Madrid by Gómez-Jarabo and Sánchez Delgado [71], with teachers in function and in training, reveals lower rates of permanent training on coeducation and gender (less than 12%). Despite this, most of the people who participated in the research considered that they were trained in these issues and that a more practical, classroom-centered approach was needed. Similar results were found by Aristizabal et al. [15] in Vitoria-Gasteiz (Spain), where teachers expressed the need for more practical training. There is no doubt that awareness and theoretical deepening are insufficient, and that training actions focused on critical, queer, and feminist pedagogies are necessary [3,42,72].

However, the findings of this work also reveal a great theoretical lack of knowledge of relevant women in the field of history, science, and culture, an aspect already discovered in previous research [14]. As already indicated, an inexcusable task of the school is to show female references that allow the construction of other identities [12,13,33,59]. It should not, therefore, be limited to reproducing history and science from a classical paradigm [27] but should present the constructive mechanisms of historical knowledge as a set of human activities in which all participate. It is essential to strengthen theoretical training on coeducation and sexual and gender diversities. This training should present feminine and masculine references that deconstruct hegemonic identities and allow new models of representation [16,36]. However, it is also essential to offer practical training, focused on pedagogical issues that can be transferred to the classroom. It is therefore a matter of providing comprehensive training that includes awareness, feminist and gender studies content, pedagogical and didactic content, and space for reflection and self-criticism.

The study of attitudes, which are understood as determining aspects for overcoming the first level for equality, reveals reduced levels of sexism and heterosexism in future teachers. This circumstance should be highlighted since it contrasts with previous research on future teachers [52,53,73]. In general, the researches on ambivalent sexism carried out in the Spanish context with student teachers reflects higher levels of sexism [52,53], drawing a variable scenario around this type of attitude. It is essential, therefore, to continue to emphasize these attitudes, even more so as studies carried out with teachers in function reveal both the presence of sexism and the difficulty of identifying androcentric teaching practices [14,71,74]. A similar situation is found in the research of attitudes toward homosexuality of future teachers. In Melilla (Spain), for example, Robles-Reina et al. [73]

discover a high level of prejudice toward homosexuals. However, Penna Tosso and Sánchez Sáinz [55] find reduced levels of homophobia behavioral, cognitive, and affective attitudes. Taking into account the results obtained in this work, it can be stated that future teachers have a favorable attitude toward homosexual people. However, prejudice should not be considered to be fully overcome. Therefore, this first level must be reinforced for equality by focusing on these issues throughout people's schooling. Nevertheless, future teachers are favorably disposed toward access to higher levels in the proposed theoretical model.

The second level proposed is related to the public, historical, and cultural visibility of the female experience. This aspect was evaluated with the WH, focusing on the identification of relevant women [59,63]. As expected, there is a generalized lack of knowledge of historical and cultural references for women, an aspect already discovered in other research studies [14,63]. The marked androcentric nature of the curricular content in degrees linked to teaching is noted, a circumstance that may endanger the necessary inclusion of female voices in the school context [11–13,75,76]. Moreover, this scarce visibility and representation of women and of the female experience is greater in the trainee teachers of Primary Education since they are the ones who obtain, in a significant way, a lower number of successes in the WH. This forces an urgent rethinking of the curricula, including the gender perspective in the epistemology and methodology of the various disciplines that make up these degrees. The objective should be both the inclusion of clear references in the different subjects and the construction of unbiased scientific knowledge. In the words of Martínez et al. [31] (p. 6), “a gender-blind science is, in practice, a “bad” science, since it fails to grasp social complexity”. In any case, the results obtained in this study show that the second level of the proposed theoretical model is still far from being overcome.

The impacts of training on gender equality and on coeducation are also assessed in this study. The results obtained show that the levels of sexism and heterosexism of the people trained in these issues are not less, contrary to what is expected or desired. However, the overall levels of both forms of prejudice are very low. These findings coincide with those obtained in the research carried out in Extremadura (Spain) by Cordon et al. [53] in a sample of 1296 students of the Degree in Primary Education. In their case, despite the training given throughout the Degree, the levels of sexism were similar in all courses, showing a lack of impact on the attitudes of future teachers. This does not mean that the inclusion of feminist and coeducational content is sterile but rather that it is alert to how it is being carried out. Coeducation must be based on a spiral curriculum [42,77], which allows the questioning of the inequalities produced by the sex/gender system and the consolidation of attitudes of tolerance, respect, and inclusion. However, the results obtained show a limited duration of this type of training, evidencing its punctual and poorly integrated nature. In any case, when training is continuous and in depth, it produces significant improvements in the knowledge and attitudes of its recipients, as shown by various studies [55,78,79]. Therefore, it can be concluded that the inclusion of gender content in initial and in-service teacher training is not enough. As indicated by Gómez-Jarabo and Sánchez Delgado [71], attention must be paid to affective aspects and skills related to teamwork since they are essential for the development of equality plans in schools. In short, a commitment must be made to a holistic education with a gender perspective, which addresses these issues in an integrated and spiraling manner, assuming the responsibility that all citizens have for equality.

5. Conclusions

Throughout this study, the path to transforming the school into an inclusive and co-educational space was traced and described. A theoretical model was proposed in a staircase that must be gradually moved to make this goal come true. The intention is to promote these advances in an intentional manner, as well as to diagnose the level or levels at which future teachers are situated. One of the proposed objectives of this research is to evaluate the training in gender equality and coeducation that future teachers are receiving. As has already been indicated, there are significant training deficiencies. The

scarce presence of pedagogical training in gender equality in the three universities studied is noteworthy. Only one in three students has received some training in coeducation [15,71]. The study also shows that there is little or no curricular integration of these contents, given the variability in the duration of training or the high level of ignorance of emblematic women. This aspect should also be highlighted since students lacking this specific training show a greater, albeit insufficient, mastery of this knowledge.

As mentioned above, an attempt was made to determine the degree to which the different levels of the proposed theoretical model were exceeded. The future teachers studied are between the first and second levels of the model. On the one hand, it presents reduced levels of sexism and heterosexism. As a result, there is an adequate predisposition toward work for equality and citizenship in the school. On the other hand, the notable lack of knowledge of female references shows the remoteness of the second level. This invites reflection on teacher training and warns of the low probability that these students, when carrying out their profession, will include female voices. As has been stated in the discussion, the integration of clear references in different subjects of studies linked to teaching is already an unavoidable obligation. With respect to the higher levels of the model today, they seem to be a chimera, but they should guide and motivate the work that is still pending.

In summary, the results obtained in the present research show the need to expand, improve, and consolidate initial teacher training in gender, queer theories, and citizen awareness [3,43,75,80]. It is not enough, as has been reiterated, with isolated interventions or awareness raising on these issues. It will be necessary to deepen, therefore, in the feminist epistemology and in the construction of the different disciplines [11,31]. Similarly, critical thinking and social responsibility in the face of the coeducational challenge should be promoted in future teachers. The idea is to offer teaching–learning approaches that make the female experience visible, redefine complex identity attributes, and promote education for democratic and egalitarian citizenship. The faculties of education must therefore facilitate the passage of students through the different “levels of equality” described.

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