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Coeducation in Secondary Education: a proposal to use it as a gender-based violence preventive model.

MASTER EN PROFESOR DE EDUCACIÓN SECUNDARIA OBLIGATORIA Y BACHILLERATO, FORMACIÓN PROFESIONAL Y ENSEÑANZAS DE IDIOMAS

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Resumen

Las mujeres han sufrido grandes desigualdades a lo largo de la historia caminando siempre por detrás del género masculino en cuanto derechos, privilegios y remuneraciones salariales.

Estas desigualdades han repercutido negativamente en varios aspectos de sus vidas originando, en ocasiones, episodios de violencia de género producidos tanto en el pasado como en la actualidad. En el siglo XVIII surgió una sociedad cansada de estas desigualdades, una sociedad compuesta mayoritariamente por mujeres deseosas de conseguir una igualdad real. Con el paso de los años, hacia el siglo XX, en España, se consiguió establecer una educación compartida por hombres y mujeres en los que ambos convivían y aprendían en una misma clase. La llegada de esta educación que hoy conocemos como coeducación consiguió abrirse hueco definitivamente a finales del siglo XX.

Situándonos en la actualidad, siglo XXI, y utilizando el sistema educativo de la coeducación se pretende con este TFM hacer un recorrido sobre la historia del feminismo, la situación actual de violencia de género, así como de la coeducación y del anterior sistema educativo, la escuela segregada. Para finalmente presentar una propuesta en la que se utiliza la coeducación como modelo preventivo de violencia de género.

Abstract

Women have suffered great inequalities throughout history being always behind the male gender in terms of rights, privileges and salary.

These inequalities have had a negative impact on various aspects of their lives causing episodes of gender violence that do not only occurred in the past but today. In the eighteenth century a society, mostly integrated by women, tired of these inequalities emerged. It was a society that wanted to achieve real equality. Over the years, towards the 20th century, an education shared by men and women, in which both lived and learned in the same classroom, was established in Spain. The arrival of this education, known as coeducation today, managed to be set as the main one at the end of the twentieth century.

Bearing in mind the current educational system, coeducation, this TFM aims to make a journey through the history of feminism, the current situation of gender violence and coeducation, as well as the previous educational system, the segregated school. To finally present a proposal in which coeducation is used as a preventive model of gender violence.

1. INTRODUCTION

During the last years, the difference between men and women has been improving having almost disappeared. The fight for equality between men and women started to appear in the XVIII century when women started to denounce the oppression, discrimination, inequality, and abuse they suffered in society. Before this period, men were the only human that were recognised in economic, job, art... fields but there were also some women who achieved to stand out among men because of their own work. It was in the XIX and XX when women reached most of rights they have today. The XXI century can be considered the one in which woman is as equal as man in terms of rights, jobs and economy. Although, as it was said before, women lives have been improved during these years, there are still some aspects of life in which they are not treated the same way.

This inequality between men and women has caused, in some situations, the gender-based violence to occur, making that the dreamt equality were more and more far away to happen. Since equality women and men have today has required a lot, it is important to continue and improve it. The better way to do this, is by benefit from the actual educational model Spain has, the coeducation, in which girls and boys stay together in a class sharing their knowledge without considering their sexes. There is a great need for working these aspects in the class, showing students that they can be whatever they want and that they are equal in all aspects of life. The differences women have gone through during many years must not be repeated so by working with them, using a didactic unit in a classroom, could be a good way to stop gender inequalities to happen again.

2. JUSTIFICATION

To prevent the gender-based violence is crucial to create a healthier society. The best way to do this is by educating young people on equal terms. For this reason, the didactic unit proposed here has been created. The main purpose of this didactic proposal is to prevent gender-based violence through coeducation in secondary education. It is intended to show an equality between both sexes with the aim that in the future the gender-based violence disappear. As Karl A. Menninger said "Lo que se les dé a los niños, los niños darán a la sociedad".

It is a proposal that lasts one trimester, it is aimed to be done in the second term, from January to March, matching the International Women's Day. The main didactic unit will last one month with a total of eight lessons. This topic will be worked twice a week, leaving the third remaining week class for the work of the term content that should not neither be forgotten.

All the eight lessons, have different objectives related with the prevention of gender violence. Before and after the didactic proposal created, four different activities will be done during the whole term.

The gender-based violence is a problem that our society suffers every day so it is important to deal with equality in classroom in order to make students realise that although they have different genre, they are all equal. For this reason, it is a topic that has not only be covered in one month but at least in one term or even using the whole academic year.

2.1 Objectives

- Elaborate a gender perspective didactic unit to help teachers and students focus on the real equality.
- Analyse the Spanish coeducational system in order to use it as the perfect model for the equal education of boys and girls.
- Investigate about feminism history to realise how women have fight to achieve their rights.
- Reflect on gender-based violence in the 20th and 21th century.

3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK.

3.1 Gender-based violence

The gender-based violence is the one exercised over the women by those who are related or have been related to her by analogous relationship (partner or former partner) (Instituto de la Mujer y para la Igualdad de Oportunidades, 2020, p. 1).

The UN defines gender based violence as “Todo acto de violencia basado en el género que tiene como resultado posible o real un daño físico, sexual o psicológico, incluidas las amenazas, la coerción o la privación arbitraria de la libertad, ya sea que ocurra en la vida pública o en la vida privada” (Resolución 48/104, 20 de diciembre de 1993) (Pastorino Mellado, 2014, p. 113). This organization has, in fact, insisted on the gender inequality that is still presented in our society without distinguishing between place, social class, ethnicity or culture (Pastorino Mellado, 2014, p. 113).

It seems that this violence has existed since always, and we have evidences in many historical books. In the article, “sobre historia de las mujeres y violencia de género” it can be seen this violence during the different periods of our history, from IV century to our days. There were many authors that in their periods justified this kind of violence and abuse to women, showing it as a normal human behaviour. Women was seeing as an inferior, flawed being and subjected to the men’s will. There are many examples of these kind of books, it can be highlighted “el Código de Hammurabi (s. XVII a. C.), Zaratustra (s.VII a. C.), Leyes de Manu (libro sagrado de la India, hacia s.VI a. C.), Aristóteles (s. IV a. C.), San Pablo (s. I d. C.), Mahoma (s.VII d. C.), *Le Ménagier de Paris* (tratado de moral y economía doméstica, escrito por un burgués parisino en 1383), Lutero (s. XVI)” (González Mínguez, 2008, p. 15). It is also important to stand out the little appreciation religious founders have had with women during history, it has made, among other situations, that machismo still continues today in our society. Having in mind the typical Spanish “refranes”, it can be considered that many of them have a great sense of machismo in there. An example can be “ A la mujer y a la burra, todos los días zurra”, “La mujer y la sartén, en la cocina están bien” or “ La mujer tiene derecho si se mantiene en su techo”. These “refranes” has definitely consequences nowadays since there are people that still have these kind of thoughts (González Mínguez, 2008, pp. 15). Moreover, it is important to

remember why violence is presented in our history, many anthropologist state that violence mostly occurs due to power search or preservation of this power achievement. Thus, violence is not presented in our biological origin but in our cultural customs (González Mínguez, 2008, p. 16).

3.1.1 Real Facts

If we consider data about gender-based violence since 2003, the first year in which victims started to be counted, until 2020, it can be said that 1.054 women have been killed by their own partners, being 21 of them killed this year (*Estadísticas, encuestas, estudios e investigaciones - Delegación del Gobierno contra la Violencia de Género, 2020*).

The historical denigration of women that was mentioned above, not only cause that some women are killed by their partners, but some children are too, by their parent, as a way to punish his partner. Since 2013 until today 31 children have died because of male violence (*Estadísticas, encuestas, estudios e investigaciones - Delegación del Gobierno contra la Violencia de Género, 2020*). Women are also victims of sexual violence, since 2010 until 2018, 21.537 suffered this type of violence (*Estadísticas, encuestas, estudios e investigaciones - Delegación del Gobierno contra la Violencia de Género, 2020*).



(*Estadísticas, encuestas, estudios e investigaciones - Delegación del Gobierno contra la Violencia de Género, 2020*)

Bearing in mind 2020, as it was said above, 21 women have been killed by their partners in Spain, fourth of them in the alarm state proclaimed due to the covid-19 crisis. Andalusia and Catalonia head the list with five victims each, they are followed by Comunitat Valenciana with

three victims, Galicia and Castile- La Mancha with 2 victims each and finally Asturias, Canary, Madrid and Basque Country with one victim each (*Estadísticas, encuestas, estudios e investigaciones - Delegación del Gobierno contra la Violencia de Género, 2020*).

Comunidad / Ciudad autónoma	Número	%
TOTAL	21	100.0
Andalucía	5	23.8
Aragón	0	0.0
Asturias, Principado de	1	4.8
Baleares, Illes	0	0.0
Canarias	1	4.8
Cantabria	0	0.0
Castilla y León	0	0.0
Castilla - La Mancha	2	9.5
Cataluña	5	23.8
Comunitat Valenciana	3	14.3
Extremadura	0	0.0
Galicia	2	9.5
Madrid, Comunidad de	1	4.8
Murcia, Región de	0	0.0
Navarra, Comunidad Foral de	0	0.0
País Vasco	1	4.8
Rioja, La	0	0.0
Ceuta	0	0.0
Melilla	0	0.0

(*Estadísticas, encuestas, estudios e investigaciones - Delegación del Gobierno contra la Violencia de Género, 2020*).

The age category with the highest victims number is the one situated on the 41 to 50 years old, followed by the 31 to 40 years old and the 71 to 80 years old (*Estadísticas, encuestas, estudios e investigaciones - Delegación del Gobierno contra la Violencia de Género, 2020*). It is important to highlight that only three of the total of 21 cases had denounced their aggressor previously, what reveals the insecurity, fear or lack of knowledge some women face in this situation. Taking into account the January to June period in 2020, there are three victims less with regard to the same period in 2019 (*Estadísticas, encuestas, estudios e investigaciones - Delegación del Gobierno contra la Violencia de Género, 2020*). This last year, 2019, is considered the worst year concerning women killed by their partners, being the one with the highest number for five years (Ferragut, 2020).

3.2 Feminist Movement

History of mankind is basically androcentrist, what means that men were the cornerstone in society. On their part, women received an invisible role, they were always at the rear. If we travel to the past, it is difficult to find successful women as writers, painters, musicians... They even hide themselves by using a masculine name when they create a piece of art. Being always behind men was something that makes women being tired and decide to fight for a new way of living, an equality in society. It was at this moment when feminism was born. As it was said above, in the past, men were the only human that were recognised in economic, job, art... fields. There were few women that achieved to stand out among men and the first ones in our history were Cleopatra and Joan of Arc (Pinto González, 2003, p. 31).

The first signs of feminism can be settled on XVIII century, in the period of the Industrial Revolution, when women started to complain for social demands such as discrimination, inequality, oppression and abuse they received. They claimed their rights through manifestation on the streets (Pinto González, 2003, p. 31). The idea that grown up in that period, liberty, equality and fraternity as the way to live in society, was the momentum women needed for the change. They followed a long, progressive and really hard way to achieve rights women have nowadays.

From those beginnings, the feminism can be divided in three periods: enlightened feminism, suffragette feminism and contemporary feminism (Garzón, 2018, p. 1).

- Enlightened Feminism

As it was said above, the XVIII century marks the beginning of women struggle for their rights. In that period, the debates concerning women rights started to appear, it was unthinkable some years later. The publication of Poulain de la Barre *De l'égalité des deux sexes* in 1673 and Mary Wollstonecraft *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman: with Structures on Political and Moral Subjects* in 1792 (Garzón, 2018, p. 1) made that society started to think on how they were organised and about the inequalities between both sexes. At this time, the starting point of the debates can be placed.

It is also important to highlight some women who wrote the “Cahiers de doléances” (complaints books) and presented them into the French assembly in 1789. In these books, they affirmed the oppression they suffered as a discriminated group (Atta Vitores, 2018, p. 8).

Not only women cared about their rights, men also took a position on this movement. Poulain de la Barre, as it was mentioned before, with his work *De l'égalité des deux sexes* made an important work in this fight. Marie-Jean-Antoine Caritat, known as Marquis of Condorcet, took also actively part in women acts during the French Revolution, he always defended that women and men should have the same rights and opportunities (Atta Vitores, 2018, p. 8). He specially sustained the participation of woman in the legislative acts, specifically their right to vote. He was also the pioneer of coeducation, suggesting a combined education in which boys and girls stay together and in which lessons are taught by both sexes teachers (Atta Vitores, 2018, p. 8).

The enlightenment feminism period can be considered a strong movement with a huge significance since all that we know today about feminism started to grow there.

- Suffragette Feminism

This movement placed on the XIX century, is considered the period in which a wide claiming programme of social and political women reforms was released.

The progress achieved in the Enlightened period was there when the suffragette feminism started to appear such as paid work, civil rights, legal equality, admission in the educational system... (Castaño Sanabria, 2016, p. 3) Since 1870, some women went to lessons, made exams and achieved all the necessary knowledge to graduate but it was not easy for them to obtain a job since work was considered “a men doing” (Castaño Sanabria, 2016, p. 4). In order to overcome these obstacles, more often than not, women dressed themselves as men and they used pseudonym to publish their own pieces of writing (Castaño Sanabria, 2016, p. 4) .

In this historical context, it is important to mention three countries in which the feminist fight became more and more important.

- The United States of America:

The “*American Woman Suffrage Association*” created in 1869 and founded by Lucy Stone, Henry Blackwell and Julia Ward and the “*National Woman Suffrage Association*” created in the same year and founded by Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton joined together creating the “*National American Woman Suffrage Association*” (Castaño Sanabria, 2016, p. 5). They all fought for women rights by attending conventions, attracting attention of the public opinion and publishing brochures, journals, magazines and books (Castaño Sanabria, 2016, p. 5).

- France:

The “*Société le Droit des Femmes*” founded in 1876 by Hubertine Auclert claimed different rights for women such as professional schools, economic independence and married women rights recognition (Castaño Sanabria, 2016, p. 6). They were strongly known for the achievement of divorce legislation and separation of property in 1884. They also published many articles with the agenda of women claims (Castaño Sanabria, 2016, p. 6).

- England:

The “*National Union of Women’s Suffrage Societies*” was founded in 1887 by Millicent Garrett Fawcett and Lydia Becker, in this organisation there were also men members. The main objective of the society was to persuade the parliament members in order to achieve women vote right (Castaño Sanabria, 2016, p. 7). They conducted peaceful protests and wrote formal declarations in order to send them to the parliament.

The “*Women’s Social and Political Union*” was another decisive organisation in England. It was founded in 1903 by Emmeline Pankhurst. The members were known as “las furias criminales de Londres” since they used more shocking techniques that were certainly listened in the country (Castaño Sanabria, 2016, p. 7).

In Spain, the suffragist movement was fragile, weak and limited. There are many researches that focus on this movement in Spain but all of them match in results (Rubio, 2004, pp. 459). There were a very limited social impact of feminism in Spain during the XIX century while women in the rest of the world were claiming the right to vote. It was only after the World War II when a few women voices started to be listened (Rubio, 2004, p. 458).

“Nunca hubo en España algo que pueda compararse al impulso agresivo y heroico de las sufragistas británicas (...) Nuestro feminismo no llegó nunca a formar lo que se llama un movimiento y tuvo siempre un carácter vergonzante(...) La resignación fue el rasgo dominante de nuestras mujeres y si a comienzos de los años 20 llegó a tener cierta importancia fue seguramente a consecuencia de las repercusiones de la guerra europea” (Rubio, 2004, p. 458)

- Contemporary Feminism

The main job of this feminism is to establish in all over the world the equality between both sexes and finish with the heaviest scourgests of women lives. Unfortunately, this feminism is not a global one since there are many countries that do not exercise it. It is one of the movement that support the most heaviest loads since it should finish with “la discriminación de élites y con los graves problemas irresueltos del empleo y la violencia con raíces profundas que se niegan a desanidarse” (Garzón, 2018, p. 2)

It is also important to mention the other view of feminism that started to notice in the XIX century. This view was supported mainly by men that saw feminism as an extreme ideology whose main purpose was to cancel men capacities. These men saw feminist women as violent people (Garzón, 2018, p. 7). They were against feminism with reasons like women have motherly obligations in order to justify social inequalities. This view is still existing in our society so for this reason it is important to highlight that feminism is “un movimiento de transformación sociopolítica y cultural que promueve el cumplimiento efectivo del principio de igualdad de todas las personas” (Garzón, 2018, p. 7).

3.3 Education: types of schools based on gender

3.3.1 Segregated by gender schools and coeducation schools

The segregated by gender schools were mostly famous in the past although nowadays there are some that still remain in force. They were an idea of gender differentiation because of the cultural patterns and the different destinations women and men had in their lives. (Subirats, 2010, p. 144) As the equality between both genders has been coming out, the number of these schools have been decreasing, although in some countries where women have no the same rights as men have, there are still a great number of these schools. In the Western countries, where the equality between women and men are more real, the majority of schools are mixed (Subirats, 2010, p. 144) .

In Spain, before XIX century, schools were all segregated by genders, boys and girls went to different schools and had different education. It was in the XIX, in the segunda República period, when schools started to be mixed, these type of education is also known as coeducation (Subirats, 2010, p. 144) so the word “coeducation” refers to “the teaching of male and female students together” (*Diccionario Cambridge Inglés y Tesaurus gratuitos*, 2020) but more in depth

El concepto de coeducación es de mayor amplitud y riqueza [...] hace referencia a la práctica consistente en que alumnos y alumnas estén en las mismas aulas, reciban el mismo tipo de enseñanza, se sometan a las mismas exigencias y realicen idénticas evaluaciones. La coeducación supone y exige una intervención explícita e intencionada que ha de partir de la revisión de las pautas sexistas de la sociedad y de las instituciones en las que se desarrolla la vida de los individuos” (*Género en la Educación para el Desarrollo. Estrategias políticas y metodológicas*, 2009, p. 41)

In those years, it was started to think about women’s equal education necessity as men had. The idea was to give women the opportunity to have access to middle and higher education as a way of level women and men rights (Subirats, 1991, p. 9). One of the first Spanish women to claim these rights was Emilia Pardo Bazán, she suggested in 1892 “consejo pedagógico” the coeducation system implementation to remove the differences between both sexes. (Subirats, 1991, p. 12).

In the segunda República, the educational system of the period achieved that the 30% of public schools in Spain became co-educational schools (Subirats, 2010, p. 12). This change in the way of educating people was supported by the progressives of the period but not by the church that was extremely against it. They defended that this type of education was dangerous since women and men had their own role in society. They also sustained their ideas with religious and moral arguments (Subirats, 1991, p. 12). All these different points of views aroused many debates because this new education not only challenged the social model that Spain had had during two centuries, but it implied a strong ideological baggage since the role of women and men were being challenged. This translation process was interrupted by the war that happened then and the Franco's dictatorship period, in which segregated schools, ruled by the retrograde church, were established again (Subirats, 1994, p. 54).

In short, the basis of our current education is placed in Europe in the XVIII century. It is a century in which women and men's education was clearly differentiated (Subirats, 1991, p. 10). The majority of people's thoughts and beliefs about education were focused on a same idea "women and men were created by God to play different roles in society so their education has to be different" (Subirats, 1991, p. 10) even they shared that "girls do not need any kind of studies or rich culture since it can oust them from their main mission in life, be mothers and wives" (Subirats, 1991, p. 10). These beliefs were lost in a way during the segunda República period and they were taken again in the XIX in the Franco's dictatorship period. In 1970, co-educational schools started to settle in Spain while in Europe were settled shortly before. Over the years, this has changed getting now a strongly different thoughts about society roles and education where discrimination tend to decrease (Subirats, 1994, p. 54). It is believed , as a general trend , that education is now the same for men and women and that the discrimination has disappeared but it is not completely true. There are some evidences that prove this, one of them is that few women access to technical education that is related to better and prestigious jobs, and another is that women and men with the same qualification have no the same job opportunities (Subirats, 1994, p. 55). These aspects are nowadays still revised trying to improve our co-educational school model.

Recent studies have proved the real inequality girls suffer in comparison with boys in the school. Nowadays, there is a great interest on showing that boys have more opportunities to

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succeed in school than girls. It does not only depend on the individual abilities, as it should be, but on gender, social class, race and culture (Fernández & Guerra, 2006, p. 16). Many sociologists recognise that there are different mechanisms, known as hidden curriculum, to select students for their future employment, taking into account the role given, physical strength and power (Fernández & Guerra, 2006, p. 16). This hidden curriculum is still promoting gender stereotypes since schools are deeply connected with culture. During many years, it has been recognised that boys in a lower social class as it can be the working class, suffered more discrimination and as a result they had less opportunities to succeed in the future (Fernández & Guerra, 2006, pp. 16). This situation is still happening with lower class boys and it is even worse when a lower class girl is considered, they abandon school doomed to failure, with low self-esteem and prepared to the natural understanding of losing against boys (Fernández & Guerra, 2006, pp. 17). These are clear evidences that show how the educational system is working without giving the same opportunities to all its members. It is essential to highlight that this huge difference between boys and girls at school not only happens there but at home. Girls go to school with a wide number of learnt stereotypes that do not change in their educational stage (Fernández & Guerra, 2006, p. 17).

Governments have worked in order to improve these differences or problems girls suffer in education through various laws and educational programs that try to solve differences in gender.

The “Ley Orgánica de medidas de protección integral contra la violencia de género, de 29 de diciembre de 2004” was a milestone in the Spanish education policies and it claimed:

“La violencia de género se enfoca por la Ley de un modo integral y multidisciplinar, empezando por el proceso de socialización y educación. La conquista de la igualdad y el respeto a la dignidad humana y la libertad de las personas, tienen que ser un objetivo prioritario en todos los niveles de socialización” (Ley Orgánica 1/2004, de 28 de diciembre, de Medidas de Protección Integral contra la Violencia de Género., 2004).

This law heed education in order to transmit values of women dignity, respect and women and men equality (Venegas, 2010, p. 397). In this law, tolerance, nonviolence and respect are the three fundamental aspects. In addition, an education for gender equality, known as

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coeducation, is incorporated in all the current educational stages, “infantil, primaria, secundaria, bachillerato y formación profesional” (Venegas, 2010, p. 398).

The first educational law that opts for the coeducation model in Spain was LOE. This law was changed and made way to a new one called LOMCE, in which the education for the equality between girls and boys and the gender-based violence prevention was taught as a cross-cutting element or through extracurricular activities, since there is no a specific subject to deal with it (Calvo García & Picazo Gutiérrez, 2015, p. 87). Using this two ways, the following topics should be taught in class making inequality linked to gender disappear:

- Studies election in order to make girls and boys have the same opportunities in terms of jobs and social status (Calvo García & Picazo Gutiérrez, 2015, p. 87).
- Promote that boys assume healthier models forgetting relations through violence and allowing them to express their feelings naturally (Calvo García & Picazo Gutiérrez, 2015, p. 87).
- Show students a global sexuality perspective not only focus on heterosexuality but in a variety in order to let them know that all the possibilities are normal and respectable (Calvo García & Picazo Gutiérrez, 2015, p. 87).

Tuesday the 3rd of march, 2020, the Spanish “Consejo de Ministros” approved LOMLOE which is a bill that modifies the previous one LOMCE. This law is intended to place the Spanish education alongside the countries with the best education. This law “pretende garantizar a estudiantes, profesorado y centros un modelo inclusivo y moderno sin itinerarios segregadores” (*La Moncloa. 03/03/2020. La Ley Orgánica de Educación impulsará una transformación profunda y exigente del sistema educativo [Consejo de Ministros], 2020*)

3.3.2 Coeducation: the lack of female referents and the use of a sexist language in the classroom

The distinctive treatment in schools can be seen through the limited female referents used in classrooms. On one side, it is arduous to find textbooks in which women appear in the position they should. It is common to find conversely, especially when learning jobs, images of men working as plumbers, mechanics or pilots and women working in home related jobs. It is also difficult to find a lesson dedicated to extol different women as referents in the public world. Girls are not use to listen in schools the variety of jobs they can apply to in the future. There are many job fields in which women are not represented such as science and investigation and it should be the educational system, together with other institutions, whose have to work in order to show that there is no limit for girls in terms of jobs and let them believe that they can achieve what they have set their mind to. To show girls and boys the wide variety of equal opportunities they can have in their future, it should be work on class the following ideas:

- Expand the knowledge students have of the new job options by showing them both gender professionals referents («La educación factor de igualdad», 2009, p. 143).
- Show them images of men and women working at home with household chores, child care or elderly care in order to let them realise that this job is not created only for women. They should be included in textbooks and in teaching materials («La educación factor de igualdad», 2009, p. 143).

On the other side, it is also important to allude to the sexist language. As it has been mentioned along this project, women have traditionally suffered discrimination in different aspects of their lives but also in language (M. Á. C. Fernández, 1999, p. 9). Language has been created by humans to communicate among them, this language represents in some way the society in which they live so if there is social or genre differences between people, language will reflect it. There are structural and use differences between the way men and women handle language and it is called “sexismo lingüístico” (M. Á. C. Fernández, 1999, p. 9). The “sexismo lingüístico consiste en un diverso tratamiento que, a través de la lengua, hacemos del individuo en función de los genitales con los que ha nacido” (M. Á. C. Fernández, 1999, p. 9). Spain has a very

strong patriarchal tradition and it has influenced its language somehow. In this case, the linguistic system has a strong male perspective, it is known as androcentrism (M. Á. C. Fernández, 1999, p. 10) . Androcentrism “supone que la medida de todas las cosas se toma de los varones y que, en el caso de que las mujeres sean consideradas, son tratadas siempre como una desviación o alejamiento de la norma, construida esta sobre los patrones masculinos” (M. Á. C. Fernández, 1999, p. 9). Through language women can be underestimated as well as it can be used as a misogynist element.

The application of the coeducation in the Spanish educational system was thought to decrease the educational differences between females and males, eliminate prejudices and dilute taboos (M. Á. C. Fernández, 1999, p. 10) but unfortunately it is not the final solution since these problems still appear in a Spanish classroom and, as it was said above, one of the concepts that enact it is the use of the language.

It is recognised by some authors that the Spanish language is not sexist itself but it can be in the way we use it. Language is considered one of the main conduit to transmit and set stereotypes (Alario Trigueros & Aguita Martínez, 1999, p.36). Through verbal and non-verbal language different elements that show people how to behave appear. These elements are songs and tales in which a divided world is represented, the male world with powerful kings, brave soldiers, fierce ogres... and the female world with delicate princesses, wicked witches, fearful girls... these characters use different objects (sceptres-magic wand, shields-poison, guns-combs) in the stories what makes them adopt different attitudes (courage-passivity, aggressiveness-shyness, adventure-weakness) (Alario Trigueros & Aguita Martínez, 1999, p. 36). After these elements, others appear such as sayings, films, games, toys, advertisement spots... all of them are used in children daily live and also in school centres.

“Y en todos estos medios educativos y de información el sexismo estará presente y el lenguaje será el elemento clave para su transmisión, conformando una cultura donde los roles de lo masculino y de lo femenino quedarán establecidos y además jerarquizados.” (Alario Trigueros & Aguita Martínez, 1999, p. 36)

Bearing in mind the way in which sexism, covered above, can appear in a classroom, it is important to point out two aspects: textbooks and teachers.

- Textbooks:

There are different investigations about how sexist language is used and how it is measured in textbooks as the one proposed by Zaldivar in which he gives a number of patterns in order to study sexism in school textbooks. He established, as a measurement element, the use of generic or collective terms such as population, community, humanity, bourgeoisie, peasantry (M. Á. C. Fernández, 1999, p. 22).

“La Concellería de la Muller del Ayuntamiento de Vigo” takes also part in this analysis by offering a number of youth and children’s stories in which its characters has nothing to do with androcentrism and stereotypes (M. Á. C. Fernández, 1999, p. 22).

An analysis done by Nuria Garreta and Pilar Careaga states that in textbooks a discriminant image of female sex is reinforced in all schools subjects and levels. Women appear less in this book and when it happens they are represented doing subordination and auxiliary activities (Alario Trigueros & Aguita Martínez, 1999, p. 38).

With the idea of solving these problems, Cremades, Rodes and las hermanas Simón propose a methodology that allow students to analyse and comment texts from a gender perspective in order to consider a number of concepts, sentimental education, gender, space, time and language (M. Á. C. Fernández, 1999, p. 22).

It is important to highlight in this section, the researches done by three different authors López Valero, Lledó and López-Hidalgo, they write three different investigations that are considered ancient documents but they are still valuable.

López Valero conducted a study focused on secondary and primary education textbooks in order to detect sexism in the iconic and verbal language used, he also proposed some alternatives to avoid it in future textbooks editions. The results in this investigation showed that the grammatical genre used was the generic masculine and that there were asymmetrical use of the job names and forms of treatment (M. Á. C. Fernández, 1999, p. 24).

In the Lledó's textbook, it is verified the use of androcentrism in language and some alternatives were proposed in the language linguistic use like the use of generic and collective terms. He also proposed different mechanism to create feminine words for the job related lexicon (M. Á. C. Fernández, 1999, p. 25).

Finally, López Hidalgo created a notebook with didactic materials and different videos in order to be done by secondary students (M. Á. C. Fernández, 1999, pp. 25).

- Different students' treatments by teachers:

As the coeducation system started to be the formal one for the Spanish educational system, teachers try to avoid the different treatment boys and girls had been receiving during years.

“Los y las docentes se olvidan del sexo del alumnado y tratan de olvidarlo en el nombre de la igualdad de oportunidades, para que la educación sea justa, neutral y correcta. Los y las profesoras realizan una discriminación de forma inconsciente, ya que creen no ejercer ninguna forma de discriminación explícita y consciente” (Alario Trigueros & Aguita Martínez, 1999, p. 38)

This unconscious discrimination is still existing and it is proved by the way girls and boys are distinguished. In school, boys tend to be described using the following adjectives: violent, aggressive, creative and restless while girls are described by using the following ones: mature, retailer, hard-working, calm and submissive (Alario Trigueros & Aguita Martínez, 1999, p. 38). It is a big difference between them and it makes them to be diversely and unconscious assessed, valuing girls stereotypes negatively. With these apparently positive adjectives, girls are considered docile and lack of personality people while boys, on the contrary, are considered as a strong and active personality people (Alario Trigueros & Aguita Martínez, 1999, p. 38). Normally, when girls obtain bad qualifications at school, it is attributed to a lack of capacity when it happens in boys, it is attributed to a lack of effort (Alario Trigueros & Aguita Martínez, 1999, p. 38). Certainly, this traditional believe disparages girls and it can be a result of the different treatment they receive in class. Sometimes, teachers attribute failure to genre. The result of this generic thought in boys results on failure due to a lack of motivation what makes teachers think that it is a lack of effort, in girls means a lack of capacity since teachers beliefs

make them think positively about girls considering them hard-worker and aware of what they do (Alario Trigueros & Aguita Martínez, 1999, p. 38). In some way, genre roles are highly presented at school since humans get them when they born depending on their own gender, being defined all their lives with adjectives as the ones that can be seen in the following table:

Cuando alguien se comporta de forma:	Si es niña, se dice que es...	Si es niño, se dice que es...
Activa	Nerviosa	Inquieto
Insistente	Terca	Tenaz
Sensible	Delicada	Afeminado
Desenvuelta	Grosera	Seguro de sí mismo
Desinhibida	Pícaro	Simpático
Obediente	Dócil	Débil
Temperamental	Histérica	Apasionado
Audaz	Impulsiva, actúa sin pensar	Valiente
Introversa	Tímida	Piensa bien las cosas
Curiosa	Preguntona, cotilla	Inteligente
Prudente	Juiciosa	Cobarde
Si no comparte	Egoísta	Defiende lo suyo
Si no se somete	Agresiva	Fuerte
Si cambia de opinión	Caprichosa, voluble	Capaz de reconocer sus errores

(Hontavilla García, 2014, p. 15)

The language teachers works with is sometimes considered as another problem in the classroom. Normally, teachers use to direct their oral interventions to boys by using the male gender language to encompass the whole classroom. It can make girls feel different or not included in this “whole” classroom (Alario Trigueros & Aguita Martínez, 1999, p. 38). This situation also makes that girls inhibit giving limelight to boys, who in turn, take the central spaces in classrooms and in school playgrounds imposing their traditional games. As short, the power relationships have been standardised in mixed schools what make girls use different chameleonic strategies to be invisible for teachers in the classroom.

4. DIDACTIC PROPOSAL

4.1 Context

This didactic proposal has been programmed as a way to prevent gender-based violence showing students the equality between men and women. This didactic unit is addressed to 4º de la ESO in which the teacher has notice some rude comments from some boys of the class to the girls. The classroom consists on 20 students, 12 boys and 8 girls that belong to the IES Delicias, a high school located in the Delicias neighbourhood in Valladolid. It will last four weeks matching with the 8th of March (International Women's Day) and it will be worked two days per week, although some different activities will be worked on class during the whole second trimester to make students realise that it is not an isolated topic. These students have English lessons 3 times a week thus the lesson remaining will be used to continue with the normal English course.

4.2. Legal Framework

In this part of the paper the contents and standards followed in the didactic proposal will be introduced.

BLOCK 1. Oral Text Comprehension

Contents:

Comprehension Strategies

- Use of previous information about the topic: feminism and equality.
- Hypothesis formulation about content and context.
- Manage of sociocultural and sociolinguistic aspects: social conventions, customs, values and beliefs.

Communicative Functions

- Intention, will and decision expression.
- Interest, approval, sympathy, and their contraries expression.

Syntactic-discursive structures

- Common use vocabulary related to the personal identification; environment, daily life activities; family and friends; work from the equality focus.

Standards:

Students should be able to

1. Understand and interpret both the meaning of the instructions articulated by the teacher and main ideas presented videos, songs or slides shown and given in class.
2. Understand an informal conversation in which he or she participates giving his or her own opinion with explanations and justifications, through debates whose topics are equality and feminism.
3. Distinguish, with visual or written support, the main ideas stated in presentations or talks about known or their interest topics, feminism and equality

BLOCK 2. Oral Texts Production: Expression and Interaction

Contents:

Comprehension Strategies

Planification

- Conceive the message with clarity, distinguishing its main ideas and structure

Implementation

- Express the message with clarity, coherence and using an appropriate structure.
- Use of corporal language culturally pertinent.

Sociocultural and sociolinguistic aspects

- Common use vocabulary related to the personal identification; environment, daily life

activities; family and friends; work from the equality focus.

Communicative Functions

-Intention, will and decision expression.

-Interest, approval, sympathy, and their contraries expression.

-Request and offer of information, indications, opinions, points of view and advices.

Syntactic-discursive structures

-Common use vocabulary related to the personal identification; environment, daily life activities; family and friends; work from the equality focus.

Standards:

Students should be able to

1. Make short structured presentations tested previously. Topics are based on academic or on own their interest. They can organise the information in a coherent way.

3. Participate on informal conversations face to face about feminism and equality topics exchanging information and justifying their opinions. In the same way, they can talk about invented or real future plans.

BLOCK 3. Written Texts Comprehension

Contents:

Comprehension Strategies

- Use of previous information about the topic: feminism and equality.

Sociocultural and sociolinguistic aspects

-Common use vocabulary related to the personal identification; environment, daily life activities; family and friends; work from the equality focus.

Standards:

Students should be able to

2. Understand the general sense, main points and relevant information included in public and clearly structured advertisements.

6. Understand specific information with a specific nature in web pages about worked in class topic: feminism and equality.

BLOCK 4. Written Texts Production: Expression and Interaction

Contents:

Comprehension Strategies

Planification

- Mobilize and coordinate the general and communicative competences in order to make the task efficiently.

Execution

- Express the message with clarity adjusting it to the models and formulas each type of text has.

Sociocultural and sociolinguistic aspects

- Common use vocabulary related to the personal identification; environment, daily life activities; family and friends; work from the equality focus.

Communicative Functions:

- Physical and abstract people qualities, objects, places and activities description.
- Certainty, knowledge, doubt and conjecture expression.
- Will, intention, decision, promise, command, authorisation and prohibition expression.

Syntactic-discursive structures

- Common use vocabulary related to the personal identification; environment, daily life activities; family and friends; work from the equality focus

Standards:

Students should be able to

3. Take notes with simple and relevant information about common matters and concrete aspects in the personal, academic and occupational area.
5. Write, in a conventional format, short and simple texts in which essential information about an academic topic is included. It is described situations, people, objects and places. Events are narrated in a linear sequence.

4.3 Planning

Before and after this didactic proposal some different activities related to the topic will be done twice a month so four extra activities will be used.

First activity: “Co-Ed Schools vs Non Co-Ed Schools: Which Are Better?”

In this activity, students will see a YouTube video (1) in which some students debate about this topic. After seeing it, a real debate about the topic will be done.

Second activity: “Talleres sobre Igualdad de Oportunidades y Prevención de la Violencia de Género”

The “Ayuntamiento de Valladolid” provide students with these workshops in their high schools. Teacher will schedule a workshop and he or she will try that the workshop will be made in the English language.

Third activity: “Billy Elliot Film”

In this activity, the Billy Elliot film will be watched in class. With this film, it is intended that students understand that they can be what they want to be in their lives. After watching the film, student, in groups will carry out a poster in which they expose their opinions, perceptions and reflections.

Fourth activity: “Advertising campaign comparison”



(Don't worry darling you didn't burn the beer, 2018)



(Show her it's a man's world, 2018)

These two images will be showed to students beginning with the ones on the left, teacher will ask them what is their opinion thereon. Then, she or he will show them the ones on the right and in a whole group all the images will be compared.

The main didactic proposal was thought to be developed in 4 weeks, before the 8th of March (International Women's Day) week since the final task of this didactic unit will be this day.

Description of the lessons:

Lesson 1

This lesson will be focused on the future simple “will”, a grammatical aspect that was included in the last unit seen in class. Some students have problems with it so it will be reinforce with some activities.

Activity one: “Currently Jobs”

Teacher shows students different images with people developing a specific job. They have to figure out, how these jobs are called in English. The images show women and men doing jobs that are not normally common (annex 1) thus then teacher will ask students about their opinions. Teacher can use the following questions:

- **Do you think a woman can be a mechanic?**
- **Do you think a men can be a househusband?**
- **What do you think is a perfect job for a woman? and for a men?**

Activity two: “What do you want to be in the future?”

Teacher puts on the blackboard an image with this phrase (annex 2). After that, students individually, think about three jobs that they would like to do in the future, then they have to select one, search information on the internet and finally make predictions about their future job in small groups by using the future simple “will”.

Activity three: “Our family background”

In this last activity, a debate will be done with all the students. Teacher starts asking them about the jobs the members of their family have. The idea is to realise if there is any difference between the jobs women members of their families have in relation to the men ones.

Lesson 2

Activity one: “What is feminism?”

The lesson starts with the teacher asking students what is feminism, then she lets them search information about this topic to later share with the rest of the class and realise what it does really mean.

Activity two: “TED x Teen video”

The students will watch a video included in TED webpage teen section. It will be watched without subtitles to realise how much they can understand. Then by using YouTube, in small groups, they will try to create english subtitles.

Activity three: “TED x Teen video Quiz”

Finally, students will ask the following questions in pairs. It gives teacher the opportunity to realise students listening comprehension.

- **What is the name of her magazine?**
- **Is Tavi Gevinson a feminist girl?**
- **Are women crazy? Why?**
- **In which mentioned films are women represented as multifaceted and complex characters?**
- **What are the things girls are told when they are growing up?**
- **Name three articles that appear in her blog**
- **At the end of the talk she says “be Stevie Nicks. Who is this person? Search information about it.**

Lesson 3

Activity one: “Female entrepreneur talk”

Teacher will have to find one or more females to come to their classroom and talk students about their projects. In this case, it will be used Team Valladolid: asociación de mujeres de Valladolid. An organisation created and directed by women in which they shared ideas, experiences and projects. Two or three women will go to the classroom to tell students what is the aim of the organization and also to talk about their own experiences in the labour market. After the talk, five minutes will be given to students to ask questions and ten more to complete a google form about the talk’s content in order to check their understanding and let them give their opinion. These questions are the ones included in the google form (annex 3):

- **What is the main topic of the talk?**
- **What is the name of the organization?**
- **What are the jobs of the participants?**
- **Can you summarize the talk in three lines? Try it!**
- **What is your general opinion about the topic?**
- **How you grade the talk?**

- **Useful and interesting.**
- **Boring and unuseful.**
- **Useful but boring.**

Lesson 4

Activity one: “Opinion essay about the meeting”

In this lesson, students will make an opinion essay. The main aim of this, is to realise the real writing level students have since it is common that they tend to use translators at their homes. First, teacher will explain how to develop an opinion essay, the image in annex 4 will be given to students to make their work easier. During the writing time, they will have the help of the teacher as well as they will be able to use dictionaries that teacher will bring to class.

Lesson 5

Activity one: “Emma Watson’s video: finding the future”

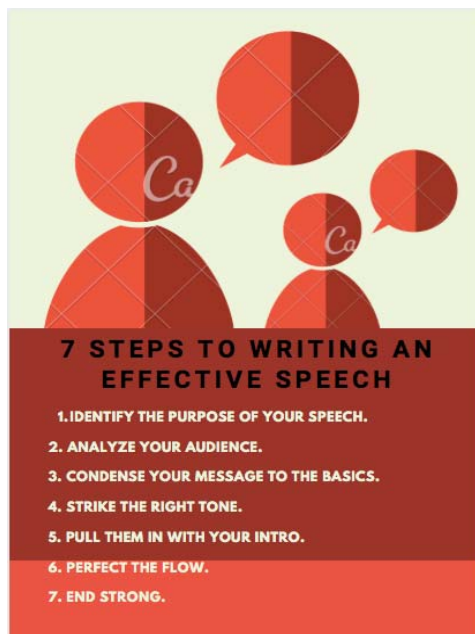
In this activity, an Emma Watson’s video about feminism will be played. The video will be played twice without subtitles and students will have to realise if the future simple is used in Watson’s speech or not, if they notice the use of “will” they will have to write the precise words down in their notebooks.

Activity Two: “Emma Watson’s video mini-debate”

In order to check the listening comprehension, a mini-debate will be done. Teacher will use the following questions to encourage students to participate in the conversation (students can have the transcript to prepare the debate, annex 5):

- **What is the name of the speaker?**
- **Do you know her?**
- **What can you say about her job?**
- **Are you agree with the things she says?**
- **Which aspects are you not agree with?**
- **Can you make an oral brief of the whole video?**

Activity Three: “How to write a speech in 7 steps”



(7 Steps to writing an effective speech, 2020)

In this activity, teacher will show students the image above. He or she will explain them how to write and perform a speech similar to the one seen previously (Emma Watson’s video) by using these seven steps. They will have to create an individual 2 minutes speech about the topic they want.

Activity Four: “Speech representation”

The final activity will be focused on the representation of each of the students’ speeches.

Lesson 6

Activity one: ““I used to love her” listening”

In this activity, teacher will play the first song Guns N' Roses’ “I used to love her”. It can be play twice or even with English subtitles until students completely understand it. After listening it, a talk will be done in a whole group. Teacher can ask students the following questions:

- **What is this song about?**
- **Can you notice a feminist tone?**
- **Do you like it?**
- **What do you think about the lyrics?**

Activity two: ““Run the world” listening”

In this activity, teacher will play the second song Beyoncé’s “run the world”. It can be play twice or even with English subtitles until students completely understand it. After listening it, a talk will be done in a whole group. Teacher can ask students the following questions:

- **What is this song about?**
- **Can you notice a feminist tone?**
- **Do you like it?**
- **What do you think about the lyrics?**

Activity three: “Run the world” and “I used to love her” comparison debate.

In this activity, both songs will be compared by doing a debate. Students will show their opinion about both and determine if there are chauvinist or feminist elements.

Lesson 7

This lesson should be done in a computer room since students will need one computer each.

Activity one: “Storytelling tips”

In this activity, students will watch a video on YouTube (2) in which they will find three basic tips for creating their stories. The video can be played one or twice, without subtitles at first and only if needed with English subtitles.

Activity two: “Creating a story”

For this activity each student will have to create a story by using a webpage called storyjumper. The topic of the story should be related with “be what you want to be without being determine by your sex” and the students will have the whole lesson to prepare it.

Lesson 8

Activity one: “Telling our own stories”

In this final lesson, students will have time to finish their stories and also to practice the storytelling. Then, one by one will tell their classmates their own stories.

Activity two: “Stories contest”

Finally, a contest will be done and students will select the three best ones considering the plot, topic agreement and their preferences. This lesson will match with the 8th of March.

4.3.1 General objectives

1. Show students the inequalities women have suffered during many years as a way to let them realise that these inequalities cannot exist in the future and encourage them to use this information in order to create a better society.
2. Let students know what feminism really means.
3. Promote equality and respect among students regardless their genre.
4. Use coeducation as the better educational system to promote the equality between women and men giving students the same treatment during their whole study period.
5. Try to finish with all the stereotypes society gives us as humans, as the real option to achieve the ultimate equality among human beings.

4.3.2 Specific objectives

Lessons' objectives

- Lesson 1: In this lesson, the future form “will” will be worked by the students since it takes part of the term contents. In addition, it is intended to show students jobs traditional stereotypes and in the same way show them that they are not the only way to follow. Students will realise that they can be what they want to in their future.
- Lesson 2: The main aim of this lesson is to show students what is the real meaning of feminism since a wrong definition of it has been conveying during the last years.
- Lesson 3: With the talk proposed, it is intended that students, all boys and girls realise that there are different jobs opportunities regardless of gender.

- Lesson 4: The main aim of this activity is that students reflect about the talk by using the written language.
- Lesson 5: The main aim of this lesson is that students know more about feminism and let them to express their own ideas about the topic.
- Lesson 6: With this lesson students will have the opportunity to know how even in songs machismo and feminism are presented. They will also have the opportunity to compare both proposed song and draw their own conclusions.
- Lesson 7: In this activity, it is intended that students use their creativity to show their own opinion about the topic worked in the whole didactic unit.
- Lesson 8: In this final activity, the main aim is to let students express their own works so all of them can realise that some of their classmates will have a similar opinion and others a different one.

4.3.3 Timing

Week	Monday	Wednesday
1st week	<p>Lesson one:</p> <p>Activity one: <u>“Currently Jobs”</u></p> <p>Activity two: <u>“What do you want to be in the future?”</u></p> <p>Activity three: <u>“Our family background”</u></p>	<p>Lesson 2</p> <p>Activity one: <u>“What is feminism?”</u></p> <p>Activity two: <u>“TED x Teen video”</u></p> <p>Activity three: <u>“TED x Teen video Quiz”</u></p>
2nd week	<p>Lesson 3</p> <p>Activity one: <u>“Female entrepreneur talk”</u></p>	<p>Lesson 4</p> <p>Activity one: <u>“Opinion essay about the meeting”</u></p>
3rd week	<p>Lesson 5</p> <p>Activity one: <u>“Emma Watson’s video: finding the future”</u></p> <p>Activity Two: <u>“Emma Watson’s video mini-debate”</u></p> <p>Activity Three: <u>“How to write a speech in 7 steps”</u></p> <p>Activity Four: <u>“Speech representation”</u></p>	<p>Lesson 6</p> <p>Activity one: <u>““I used to love her” listening”</u></p> <p>Activity two: <u>““Run the world” listening”</u></p> <p>Activity three: <u>“Run the world” and “I used to love her” comparison debate.</u></p>
4th week	<p>Lesson 7</p> <p>Activity one: <u>“Storytelling tips”</u></p> <p>Activity two: <u>“Creating a story”</u></p>	<p>Lesson 8</p> <p>Activity one: <u>“Telling our own stories”</u></p> <p>Activity two: <u>“Stories contest”</u></p>

5. CONCLUSION

To sum up, it is important to state again that the gender inequalities have always existed. In the past, women as Cleopatra or Joan of Arc were one of the few female figures that achieved to stand out among men because of the important business they made. It was in the period of the Industrial Revolution when women and some men started to fight against the inequalities women had been confronting for years so the feminist movement started to grow up. After this period, the women conditions in society improved getting the right to vote, to work, to receive a fair and equal salary among others.

Although, women's life has improved, there is something that still continue being wrong, the gender-based violence that in this year, 2020, at this time, has charged 21 victims. As a way to prevent this type of violence, this didactic unit has been created taking advantage of the current educational system that is the coeducation one, in which girls and boys are supposed to be treated the same way and receive the same education. Through this didactic unit, it is intended that students realise the inequalities women have suffered for years and the importance of feminism nowadays, as a way to promote equality and respect among students regardless their genre, trying that this equality idea belong in their minds in order to let them create a better, more respectful and more equal society in the future. Furthermore, we, as teachers have an important role in new generations' education, it is not only important to focus on the academic year programme but in the aspects of real life as it can be gender-based violence, feminism and equality, in order to achieve the real equality between men and women, this equality has improved through years but there is still much work to be done.

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7. WEBOGRAPHY

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nYI6NNNoDJ8w> (1)

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8. ANNEXES

1. Jobs



2. The Future

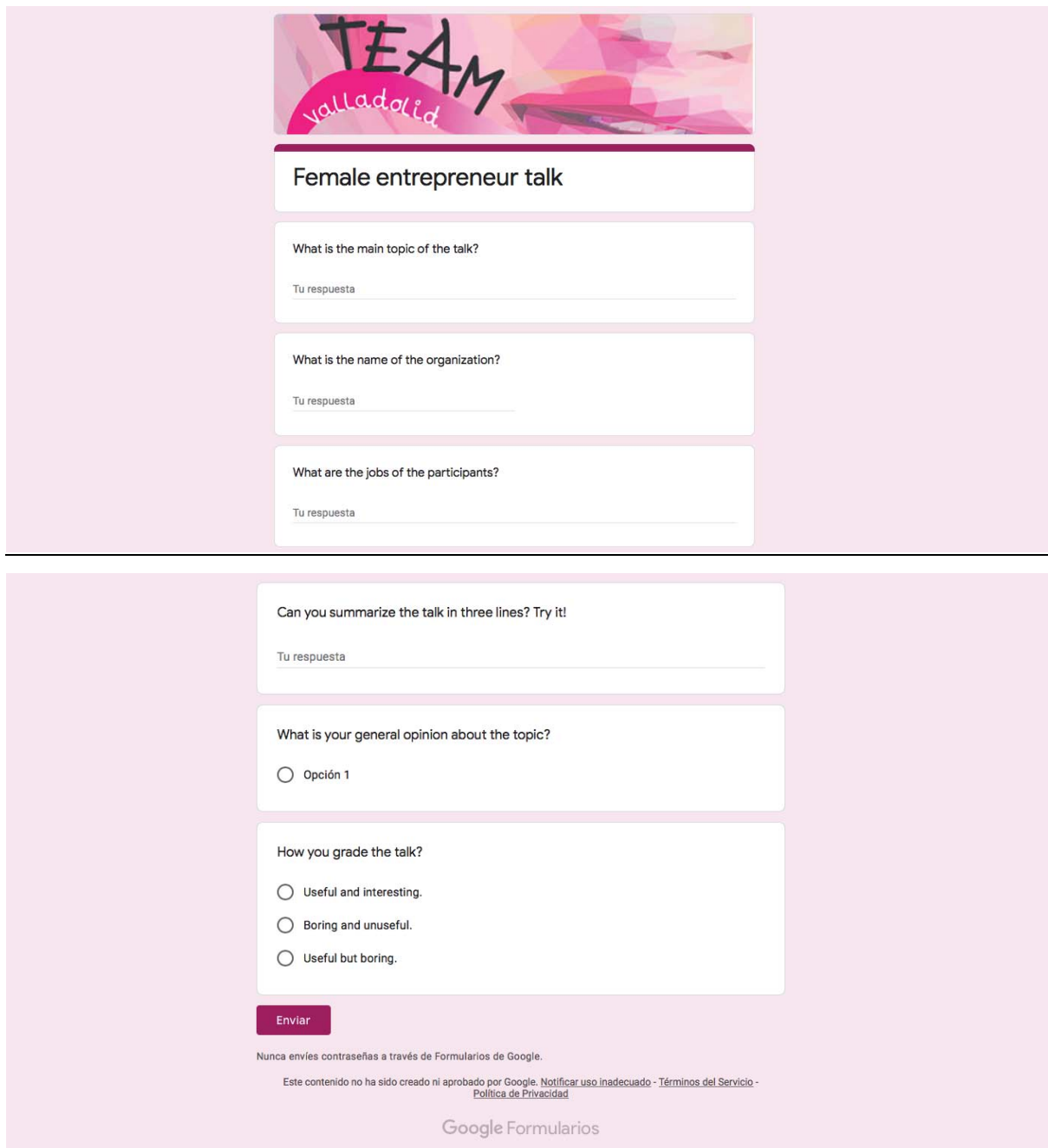


*What do you want
to be in the future?*

**LET'S TALK ABOUT
OUR FUTURE JOB**



3. Google form:



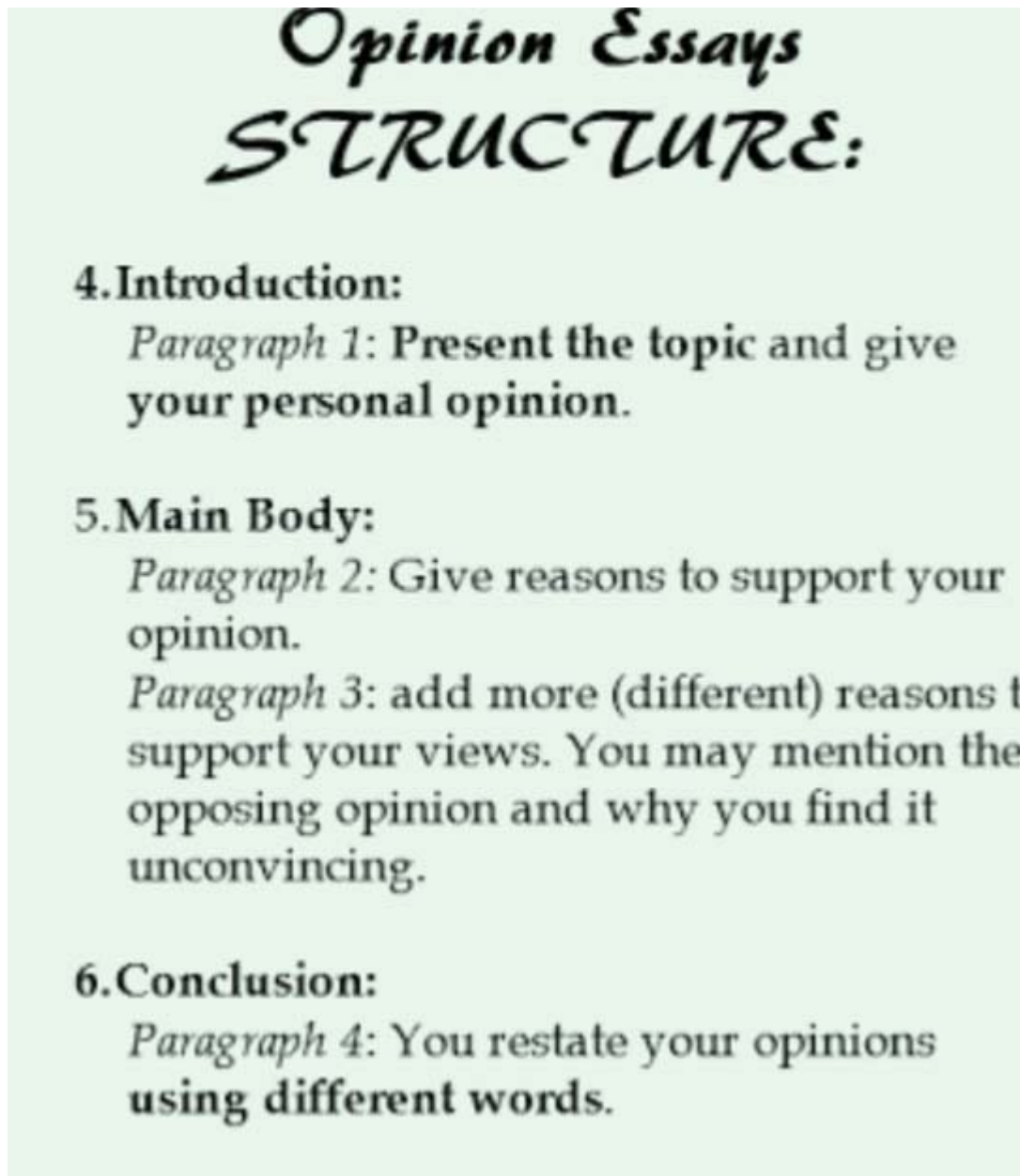
The image shows a Google Form titled "Female entrepreneur talk" with a header image that says "TEAM Valladolid". The form contains the following questions:

- What is the main topic of the talk?
Tu respuesta _____
- What is the name of the organization?
Tu respuesta _____
- What are the jobs of the participants?
Tu respuesta _____
- Can you summarize the talk in three lines? Try it!
Tu respuesta _____
- What is your general opinion about the topic?
 Opción 1
- How you grade the talk?
 Useful and interesting.
 Boring and unuseful.
 Useful but boring.

At the bottom, there is a red "Enviar" button, a warning: "Nunca envíes contraseñas a través de Formularios de Google.", a footer: "Este contenido no ha sido creado ni aprobado por Google. [Notificar uso inadecuado](#) - [Términos del Servicio](#) - [Política de Privacidad](#)", and the "Google Formularios" logo.

https://docs.google.com/forms/d/11srPb1DijZg4aYDtFBJwaKT2wXqaVVTh_zn9NrcuQb0/edit

4. An opinion essay model



<https://www.pinterest.es/pin/246572148332566827/visual-search/>

5. Emma Watson's speech

I was appointed six months ago and the more I have spoken about feminism the more I have realized that fighting for women's rights has too often become synonymous with man-hating. If there is one thing I know for certain, it is that this has to stop.

For the record, feminism by definition is: "The belief that men and women should have equal rights and opportunities. It is the theory of the political, economic and social equality of the sexes."

I started questioning gender-based assumptions when at eight I was confused at being called "bossy," because I wanted to direct the plays we would put on for our parents—but the boys were not.

When at 14 I started being sexualized by certain elements of the press.

When at 15 my girlfriends started dropping out of their sports teams because they didn't want to appear "muscly."

When at 18 my male friends were unable to express their feelings.

I decided I was a feminist and this seemed uncomplicated to me. But my recent research has shown me that feminism has become an unpopular word.

Apparently I am among the ranks of women whose expressions are seen as too strong, too aggressive, isolating, anti-men and, unattractive.

Why is the word such an uncomfortable one?

I am from Britain and think it is right that as a woman I am paid the same as my male counterparts. I think it is right that I should be able to make decisions about my own body. I think it is right that women be involved on my behalf in the policies and decision-making of my country. I think it is right that socially I am afforded the same respect as men. But sadly I can say that there is no one country in the world where all women can expect to receive these rights.

No country in the world can yet say they have achieved gender equality.

These rights I consider to be human rights but I am one of the lucky ones. My life is a sheer privilege because my parents didn't love me less because I was born a daughter. My school did not limit me because I was a girl. My mentors didn't assume I would go less far because I might give birth to a child one day. These influencers were the gender equality ambassadors that made me who I am today. They may not know it, but they are the inadvertent feminists who are changing the world today. And we need more of those.

And if you still hate the word—it is not the word that is important but the idea and the ambition behind it. Because not all women have been afforded the same rights that I have. In fact, statistically, very few have been.

In 1995, Hilary Clinton made a famous speech in Beijing about women's rights. Sadly many of the things she wanted to change are still a reality today.

But what stood out for me the most was that only 30 per cent of her audience were male. How can we affect change in the world when only half of it is invited or feel welcome to participate in the conversation?

Men—I would like to take this opportunity to extend your formal invitation. Gender equality is your issue too.

Because to date, I've seen my father's role as a parent being valued less by society despite my needing his presence as a child as much as my mother's.

I've seen young men suffering from mental illness unable to ask for help for fear it would make them look less "macho"—in fact in the UK suicide is the biggest killer of men between 20-49 years of age; eclipsing road accidents, cancer and coronary heart disease. I've seen men made fragile and insecure by a distorted sense of what constitutes male success. Men don't have the benefits of equality either.

We don't often talk about men being imprisoned by gender stereotypes but I can see that that they are and that when they are free, things will change for women as a natural consequence.

If men don't have to be aggressive in order to be accepted women won't feel compelled to be submissive. If men don't have to control, women won't have to be controlled.

Both men and women should feel free to be sensitive. Both men and women should feel free to be strong... It is time that we all perceive gender on a spectrum not as two opposing sets of ideals.

If we stop defining each other by what we are not and start defining ourselves by what we are—we can all be freer and this is what HeForShe is about. It's about freedom.

I want men to take up this mantle. So their daughters, sisters and mothers can be free from prejudice but also so that their sons have permission to be vulnerable and human too—reclaim those parts of themselves they abandoned and in doing so be a more true and complete version of themselves.

You might be thinking who is this Harry Potter girl? And what is she doing up on stage at the UN. It's a good question and trust me, I have been asking myself the same thing. I don't know if I am qualified to be here. All I know is that I care about this problem. And I want to make it better.

And having seen what I've seen—and given the chance—I feel it is my duty to say something. English Statesman Edmund Burke said: "All that is needed for the forces of evil to triumph is for enough good men and women to do nothing."

In my nervousness for this speech and in my moments of doubt I've told myself firmly—if not me, who, if not now, when. If you have similar doubts when opportunities are presented to you I hope those words might be helpful.

Because the reality is that if we do nothing it will take 75 years, or for me to be nearly a hundred before women can expect to be paid the same as men for the same work. 15.5 million girls will be married in the next 16 years as children. And at current rates it won't be until 2086 before all rural African girls will be able to receive a secondary education.

If you believe in equality, you might be one of those inadvertent feminists I spoke of earlier.

And for this I applaud you.

We are struggling for a uniting word but the good news is we have a uniting movement. It is called HeForShe. I am inviting you to step forward, to be seen to speak up, to be the "he" for "she". And to ask yourself if not me, who? If not now, when?

Thank you.