

Brief Summary of the History of Education in Spain. General Regime Educational System

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Brief Introduction

The history of education in Spain is a story of transformation, influenced by political, social, and economic factors that have shaped the educational system as we know it today. One of the most prominent themes in this context is the gradual incorporation of women into the educational system, a long and complex process that reflects the struggles and advances for gender equality in Spanish society. In this article, the evolution of education in Spain from the Middle Ages to the present is examined, with aspecial focus on the role of women and their increasing access to education.

Education in Spain during the Middle Ages

During the Middle Ages, education in Spain was reserved for a select elite, mainly men from the upper classes. Educational institutions were dominated by the Church, which controlled most of the monastic and cathedral schools. Education was limited to the teaching of Latin, theology, and grammar, with a focus on religious training. Women, for the most part, were excluded from these centers of learning, except for a few who managed to receive education within the convents.

However, it should be noted that some noblewomen will manage to access education through private tutors. A notable case was that of the nuns of the Order of Saint Benedict, who had some access to learning within the convents. However, female education during this period primarily focused on moral and religious instruction, while intellectual skills were not widely promoted for women [1].

Education in the modern era

With the arrival of the Renaissance and the cultural changes in Europe, the educational system in Spain began to expand slowly.

During the 16th and 17th centuries, new educational institutions, such as universities and colleges, were developed, although they were mostly accessible only to men. Women continued to be marginalized from the formal education system, but some, especially those from high social classes, were able to receive training in the so-called "finishing schools," where they learned domestic tasks and moral values, instead of academic skills.

The Counter-Reformation, which arrived with force in Spain at the end of the 16th century, also played an important role in keeping women out of the formal education system. During this period, the role of women in society was defined more in terms of their role as wives and mothers, which limited their opportunities to participate in academic education. The convents continued to be one of the few institutions where women could receive some form of education, although it was still limited to religious training [2].

The Enlightenment and the First Attempts at Change

The 18th century brought with it the Enlightenment movement, which promoted the idea that education should be a universal right. In Spain, figures like Gaspar Melchor de Jovellanos defended the importance of education for the progress of society. However, although the ideals of the Enlightenment promoted general education, women continued to be largely relegated. However, during this period, some schools were created for girls from wealthy families, where subjects such as reading, writing, and domestic tasks were taught. [3].

The incorporation of women into the formal education system was still in its early stages. Although the Enlightened defended basic education for women, they still considered that their main role was in the home, and their education was designed

to prepare them for this traditional role. The idea that women could actively participate in public or academic life was not yet ingrained in Spanish society.

19th Century: Liberalism and Early Educational Reforms

The 19th century witnessed profound changes in Spain's educational system, largely driven by liberalism and political reforms that sought to modernize the country. The enactment of the Moyano Law in 1857 was one of the most important milestones in the history of Spanish education, as it developed a legal framework for public and compulsory education, albeit only at a basic level [4]. This law marked an important step towards the democratization of education, but the incorporation of women into the educational system remained limited.

Throughout this century, educational opportunities for women began to expand, but unevenly. Although some schools for girls were established, their curriculum remained focused on "useful sciences" for domestic life, and higher education or professional development were not encouraged. Nevertheless, some pioneers managed to make their way into the academic field. Concepción Arenal and Emilia Pardo Bazán were two key figures who defended equal access to education for women. Arenal, a strong defender of women's rights, insisted on the need to educate women so that they could contribute to the social and economic progress of the country [5].

20th Century: Public Education and the Incorporation of Women

With the arrival of the 20th century, education in Spain underwent important transformations, especially with the proclamation of the Second Republic in 1931. The Republican government implemented a series of progressive educational reforms that advocated gender equality in access to education. The creation of mixed schools was encouraged and secular and free education was promoted. During this period, women began to enter educational institutions in greater numbers, and some managed to access higher education [6].

However, this progress was interrupted by the Civil War (1936-1939) and the subsequent Franco regime (1939-1975). Under Franco's dictatorship, women's education was once again controlled by conservative values, with an emphasis on their traditional role within the home. Women were trained primarily in "domestic economics," while opportunities to study at university were limited. The Women's Section of the Falange, for example, played an important role in promoting these traditional ideals, focusing on the training of women as wives and mothers [7].

Democracy and equal access to education

With Franco's death in 1975 and the transition to democracy, Spain experienced a profound transformation in all areas of public life, including education. The Spanish Constitution of 1978 recognized the right to education for all, without gender discrimination, and the education system was reformed to ensure equal access for men and women.

In the following decades, women began to be fully integrated into all levels of the education system. The Organic Law on the Right to Education (LODE) of 1985 and the Organic Law on Education (LOE) of 2006 were important milestones in the modernization of the Spanish education system. These laws promoted inclusive education and established compulsory education up to the age of 16, without gender distinction.

Today, women in Spain outnumber men in terms of access to higher education. According to data from the Ministry of Education, women account for more than 55% of university students in the country. In addition, significant progress has been made in the incorporation of women into fields traditionally dominated by men, such as science and technology [8].

Conclusion

The history of education in Spain reflects a path of progress towards equality, although it has been a slow process and fraught with challenges, especially with regard to the education of women. From almost total exclusion in the Middle Ages to full integration into the current educational system, the role of women in education has evolved significantly. Although barriers and challenges still exist, such as the gender gap in certain academic and professional fields, the progress achieved in recent decades is undeniable.

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